

Sight and Sound

20
PAGES OF
FILM
REVIEWS

**Movie nightmare
special**

Revolting bodies

Machine men

Invading hordes

Plus writers:

Michael Moorcock

Kurt Vonnegut

William Gibson

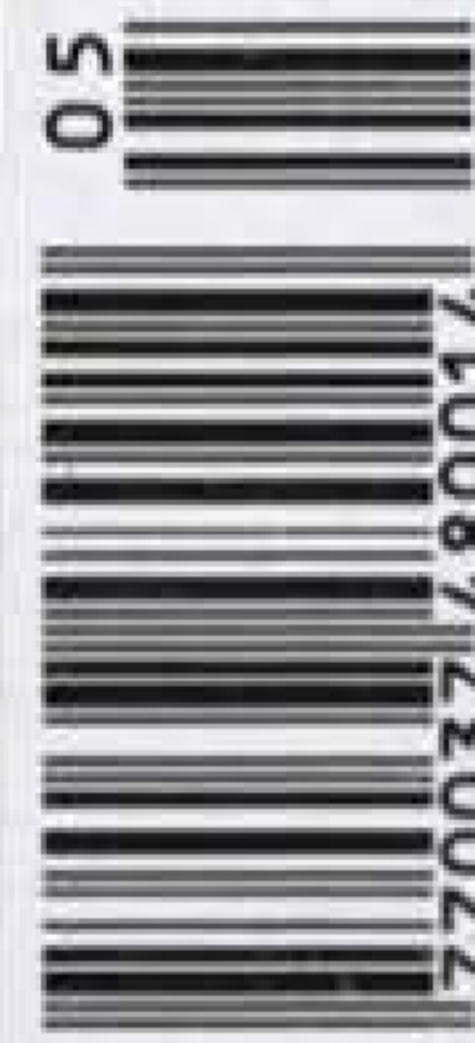
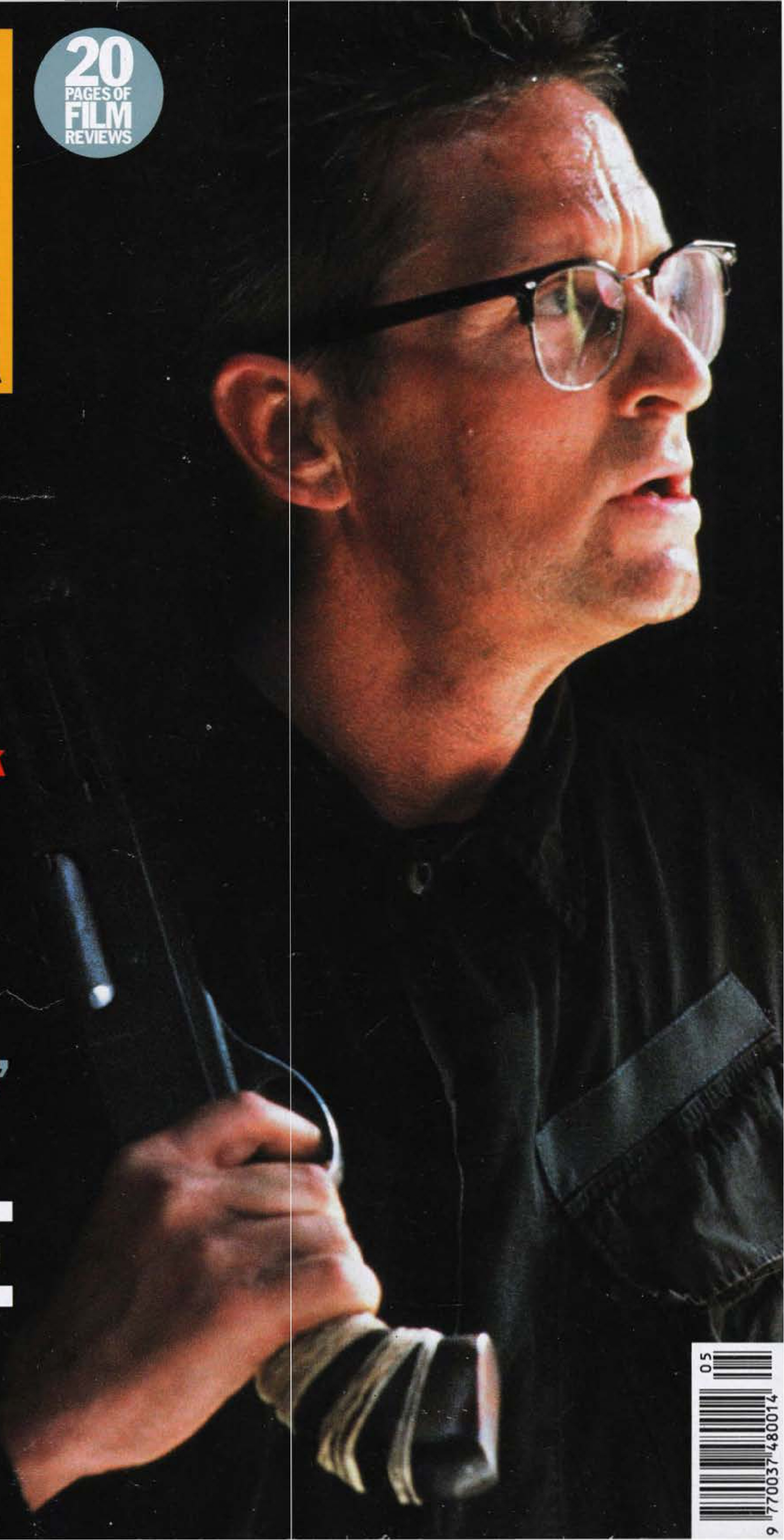
**Sex, violence and
videotape**

Film goes pop:

**'A Hard Day's Night'
to 'Performance'**

WHITE NOISE

**Michael Douglas in
'Falling Down'**



THE LONDON ● INTERNATIONAL ● FILM SCHOOL

- Training film makers for over 30 years ●
- Graduates now working worldwide ●
- Located in Covent Garden in the heart of London ●
- Accredited by B.E.C.T.U. ●
- 16mm documentary & 35mm studio filming ●
- Two year Diploma course in film making
commences three times a year: January, April, September ●

**London International Film School, Department S31
24 Shelton Street, London WC2H 9HP
071-836 0826**

Sight and Sound
(Incorporating Monthly
Film Bulletin)
Volume 3 Issue 5 (NS)
21 Stephen Street
London W1P 1PL
Telephone 071 255 1444
Facsimile 071 436 2327

Editorial

Editor
Philip Dodd
Deputy editor
Jonathan Romney
Associate editor
Pam Cook
Assistant editor
Rebecca Russell
Editorial assistant
Colette O'Reilly
Contributing editors
J. Hoberman
Pervaiz Khan
John Powers
Mike O'Pray
Tony Rayns
Jane Root
Amy Taubin
Sub-editor
Vicky Wilson
Picture editor
Millie Simpson
Design and art direction
Esterson Lackersteen

Production

Page make-up
Spy Graphics
Imagesetting
Opus Bureau
Origination
Precise Litho
Printer
Chase Web (St Ives plc)

Advertising sales

Mark Pearson
Hucksters Ltd
Riseden, Tidebrook
Wadhurst, East Sussex
Telephone 0892 784804
Facsimile 0892 784796

Business

Publishing director
Caroline Moore
Managing director
BFI publishing
Colin MacCabe
Advertising manager
Mark Pearson
Telephone 0892 784804
Newsstand distribution
UMD, 1 Benwell Road
London N7 7AX
Telephone 071 700 4600
Bookshop distribution
Central Books
99 Wallis Road
London E9 5LN
Telephone 081 986 4854
US distribution
2nd class postage paid at
Rahway, NJ. Postmaster:
send address changes to
Sight and Sound, c/o Mercury
Airfreight International Ltd
Inc., 2323 Randolph Avenue,
Avenel, NJ 07001.
Subscription price is \$56.00
Newsstand distribution by:
Eastern News Distributors Inc.
2020 Superior Street,
Sandusky, OH 44870

Annual subscription rates

UK £27.00
Europe £32.00
US airspeed £32.00
Overseas surface mail £32.00
Overseas airmail £56.00
Special rates apply to BFI
members, details available
from Sight and Sound
marketing department
For queries regarding your
subscription contact:
Subscription Department
Sight and Sound
Tower Publishing Services
Tower House, Sovereign Park
Market Harborough
Leicestershire LE16 9EF
Telephone 0858 468888
Facsimile 0858 434958
Binders available from
Sight and Sound marketing
department: UK £7.00,
overseas surface mail £9.00
Sight and Sound is part of the
Research Division, BFI



Published monthly by the
British Film Institute
ISSN 0037-4806

Sight and Sound



Jagger in 'Performance': 14



Van Damme meets John Woo: 22



'Léolo': 51

Features

WHITE NOISE

Michael Douglas takes his revenge on a world that oppresses him in the controversial *Falling Down*. Carol Clover explores why the film matters **6**

SEX VIOLENCE AND VIDEOTAPE

The current debate about screen violence is just one of a long series of panics around popular culture. By Martin Barker **10**

SNAPSHOTS OF THE 60S

When film went pop – with *Performance* and *Catch Us If You Can* – the world was turned upside down. Or was it? By Jon Savage
Plus Singer Paul Jones looks back at the days of *Privilege* **14**

THE END OF THE LINE

Jiri Menzel, director of *Closely Observed Trains*, reflects on the Czech future, films and censorship. By Robert Carver **20**

JOHN WOO'S ART ACTION MOVIE

On a set in near New Orleans, the cult Hong Kong director meets Van Damme in a new kind of film. By Berenice Reynaud **22**

FILMS: WHY DO SOME SURVIVE AND OTHERS DISAPPEAR?

Peter Wollen on how the cinematic canon changes **26**

MOVIE NIGHTMARES

A brief history of the future – *Sight and Sound* looks at cinema's fearful visions of things to come: Linda Ruth Williams on revolting bodies; Elizabeth Young on machine men; Philip Strick on invading hordes; Michael Moorcock on future nightmares; Kevin Jackson on past dystopias
Plus Comments from Kurt Vonnegut, William Gibson and J. G. Ballard **30**

Regulars

EDITORIAL Censoring Britain **3**

THE BUSINESS **4**

OBSESSION Nick Hornby on football films **40**

WRITER'S BLOCK Michael Eaton on screenwriters and *Projections 2* **41**

BOOKS Oscars; popular European cinema; David Selznick; Fassbinder; *Casablanca*; widescreen cinema **42**

LETTERS *Zéro de Conduite*; video classics **72**

Film reviews

Alive	46
Best of the Best 2	47
Body of Evidence	48
Coeur en Hiver, Un/ A Heart in Winter	49
Groundhog Day	50
Heart in Winter, A/ Un Coeur en Hiver	49
Léolo	51
Lied für Beko, Ein/ A Song For Beko	52
Mr Nanny	52
Mr Saturday Night	53
Mystery of Edwin Drood, The	54
Qiuju Da Guansi/ The Story of Qiu Ju	55
Rich in Love	56
Seduction: The Cruel Woman/ Verführung: die Grausame Frau	59
Sommersby	56
Song For Beko, A/ Ein Lied für Beko	52
Splitting Heirs	57
Story of Qiu Ju, The/ Qiuju Da Guansi	55
Untamed Heart	58
Verführung: die Grausame Frau/ Seduction: The Cruel Woman	59
Wild West	60

Re-release

Actor's Revenge, An/ Yukinojo Henge	61
Yukinojo Henge/ An Actor's Revenge	61

Television films

Cormorant, The	62
Femme Fatale	62
Long Roads, The	63
Man to Man	64
Seven Songs for Malcolm X	65

Video reviews

Peter Dean and Mark Kermode on this month's video releases **66**

Laser disc reviews

Mark Kermode on feature film laser discs **70**

Next issue on sale 25 May



2001: 30

Sight and Sound/Connoisseur Video offer

THRONE OF BLOOD

£9.99

Connoisseur and Sight and Sound are pleased to offer this masterly adaptation of Macbeth to readers at the special offer price of £9.99 + p&p

Toshiro Mifune and Isuzu Yamada give superb performances as the Lord and Lady of Cobweb Castle, in what Noel Burch described as 'One of Kurosawa's most perfect achievements'.



KUROSAWA Throne of Blood ○CR043 £9.99

APRIL RELEASES

ROHMER The Collector ○CR111 £14.99
The Marquise Von O... ○CR112 £14.99
Pauline at the Beach ○CR113 £14.99

CHABROL, DOUCHET, GODARD, POLLET, ROHMER & ROUCH Six in Paris (Paris par vu...) ○CR144 £14.99

MARCH RELEASES

FELLINI 8½ ○CR108 £14.99
RIVETTE Celine and Julie go Boating ○CR107 £14.99
ROHMER The Aviator's Wife ○CR105 £14.99
A Good Marriage ○CR106 £14.99

CONNOISSEUR VIDEO CATALOGUE - A SELECTION

ALLEGRET Blanche Fury ○CR102 £12.99
BEAUDINE Boys will be Boys ○CR100 £12.99
BERTOLUCCI Before the Revolution ○CR040 £14.99
Spider's Stratagem ○CR039 £14.99
COCTEAU Orphée ○CR004 £14.99
La Belle et la Bête ○CR018 £14.99
CRABTREE Madonna of the Seven Moons ○CR101 £12.99
DICKINSON The Arsenal Stadium Mystery ○CR099 £12.99
GODARD Weekend ○CR022 £14.99
2 or 3 things I know about her ○CR062 £14.99
GRIEVE On the Black Hill ○CR096 £12.99
GREENAWAY Early Works ○CR012 £14.99
KALIN Swoon ○CR082 £14.99
KUROSAWA Seven Samurai ○CR042 £14.99
The Bad Sleep Well ○CR076 £14.99
JARMAN Caravaggio ○CR084 £14.99
MAMET House of Games ○CR066 £12.99
Things Change ○CR067 £12.99
NORMAN MCLAREN Selected Films ○CR103 £14.99
Creative Process ○CR104 £14.99
MIKHALKOV Dark Eyes ○CR038 £14.99
MIRA NAIR Salaam Bombay ○CR030 £14.99
OPHULS La Ronde ○CR001 £14.99
PASOLINI Accattone ○CR041 £14.99
Medea ○CR005 £14.99

PASOLINI (contd.) Oedipus Rex ○CR006 £14.99

The Gospel According to St Matthew ○CR023 £14.99

RENOIR La Règle du Jeu ○CR061 £14.99

RESNAIS L'Année Dernier a Marienbad ○CR068 £14.99
Hiroshima Mon Amour ○CR069 £14.99
Nuit et Brouillard ○CR019 £9.99

RICHARDSON Charge of the Light Brigade ○CR094 £12.99

ROHMER Ma Nuit Chez Maud ○CR078 £14.99

SAVILLE Evergreen ○CR097 £12.99

First a Girl ○CR098 £12.99

SCORSESE Scorsese x 4 ○CR093 £14.99

SLUIZER The Vanishing ○CR020 £14.99

TARKOVSKY Solaris ○CR044 £14.99

Stalker ○CR045 £14.99

TATI Playtime ○CR007 £14.99

Mon Oncle ○CR008 £14.99

Jour de Fete ○CR011 £14.99

Mr. Hulot's Holiday ○CR049 £14.99

TESHIGAHARA Woman of the Dunes ○CR077 £14.99

VISCONTI Ossessione ○CR013 £14.99

Rocco and His Brothers ○CR024 £14.99

WELLES Confidential Report ○CR002 £14.99

WENDERS Wings of Desire ○CR003 £14.99

Kings of the Road ○CR015 £14.99

Alice in the Cities ○CR046 £14.99

The Goalkeepers Fear of the Penalty ○CR047 £14.99

ANIMATION COLLECTION

BROTHERS QUAY ○CR032 £12.99

ANIMATION ON FOUR ○CR033 £12.99

AARDMAN ANIMATION ○CR048 £13.99

JAN SVANKMAJER Vol 1 ○CR057 £12.99

Vol 2 ○CR058 £12.99

RA; THE PATH OF THE SUN GOD ○CR060 £12.99

WAYWARD GIRLS 1 ○CR089 £12.99

AND WICKED WOMEN 2 ○CR090 £12.99

3 ○CR091 £12.99

GREEN ANIMATION ○CR095 £12.99

To order any of the videos listed, please tick the appropriate circle. For multiple, enter the number required.

CONNOISSEUR VIDEO APRIL RELEASES



The Collector

Eric Rohmer and cinematographer Nestor Almendros combine their considerable talents to produce a bright, sassy 'moral tale' in which Haydee Politoff collects some unasked for advice in addition to the men she is gathering around herself

CR 111 £14.99



The Marquise von O...

A costume drama by Rohmer in this faithful adaptation of a nineteenth century novella. Edith Clever is the Marquise who, through events unknown even to herself, finds herself pregnant and in disgrace

CR 112 £14.99



Pauline at the Beach

Another delight from Rohmer's 'Comedies and Proverbs', in which 15 year old Pauline (Amanda Langlet) learns about the duplicity and hypocrisy of adult sexual politics

CR 113 £14.99



Six in Paris (Paris vu par...)

The six are Douchet, Rouch, Pollet, Rohmer, Godard and Chabrol and each of these outstanding French filmmakers provides his own short cinematic essay on a different arrondissement in this 95 minute 'portmanteau' film.

CR 144 £14.99

Please add £1.50 postage and packing for the first tape and 50p for each subsequent tape. Postage rates apply UK only.

Total order value £..... plus £..... p&p

I enclose a cheque for the total made payable to Connoisseur Video Limited, or charge my credit card for the total value of £.....

○ Visa ○ Access (Tick circle)

Card number

Expiry date

Name

Address

Signature

Delivery address if different from above

Name

Address

Please cut (or photocopy) the entire page and send to: Mail Order Offer, Connoisseur Video Limited, 10a Stephen Mews, London W1P 0AX

Registered in England Number 246 3593

Please allow 28 days for delivery

Prices are inclusive of VAT. VAT no. 448 8580 02

All of the above are available from Connoisseur at the mail order price shown plus postage and packing of £1.50 for the first tape and 50p per tape thereafter. Please note Connoisseur's new address. Credit card bookings only on 071 957 8960. A full catalogue of over 100 Connoisseur titles can be obtained by telephoning 071 957 8957 during office hours or by leaving your name and address on our credit card hotline on 071 957 8960. Postage rates apply UK ONLY.

Censoring Britain

Contributors to this issue

Martin Barker's books include *A Haunt of Fears*, a study of the moral panic about comics

Robert Carver is a writer and broadcaster and is film critic of the *TES*

Professor Carol Clover is the author of *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, to be published in paperback by the BFI in May

Michael Eaton is an award-winning screenwriter

Kevin Jackson has recently completed a collection of the writings of Humphrey Jennings

Richard Maltby teaches film at the University of Exeter

Michael Moorcock's most recent novel is *Jerusalem Commands*

Steve Neale is senior lecturer in film at the University of Kent

Professor Berenice Reynaud teaches film at the California Institute of the Arts

Jon Savage's book *England's Dreaming* recently won the annual Ralph J. Gleason award for the best book on music

Mark Sinker is editor of *The Wire* magazine

Philip Strick is a writer and teacher who has written widely on science fiction

Julie Wheelwright is author of *The Fatal Lover: Mata Hari and the Myth of Women in Espionage*

Linda Ruth Williams' book *Sex in the Head*, a study of D. H. Lawrence and cinema is to be published in July

Professor Peter Wollen has recently published *Raiding the Icebox*, a collection of his essays on twentieth-century culture

Elizabeth Young is the co-author of *Shopping in Space*, essays on contemporary American fiction

Reservoir Dogs and *Bad Lieutenant* were unlucky to be waiting for video classification at the British Board of Film Classification during the recent outcry against screen violence.

Their release has been postponed. Two equally 'violent' films, *Man Bites Dog* and *Romper Stomper*, had the good fortune to be put forward for the same classification before the furore. They were passed – uncut.

Everyone knows that video has made all our judgments more difficult – no one more so than BBFC director James Ferman, who would rather pass a film uncut tomorrow than cut today (the fate of *Reservoir Dogs*?). As he told *The Mail on Sunday* last month: "we now have a problem that has little to do with cinemas. The invention of video means that most families have a cinema in their living rooms – and some in their bedrooms too – with no box office to turn away those under age."

In these matters the BBFC is the powerful body, with responsibility for video as well as film – and a body those involved in the industry need to respect. Like other regulatory bodies, the board keeps itself to itself, working much in the spirit of the British constitution, without specific and detailed written guidelines. In its own words: "The Board does not rely on a written set of guidelines but operates a system of preferences so that every decision is taken in the light of previous ones." Examiners see films in pairs and if there are doubts they pass them on to another pair until an agreement is reached. The BBFC is British consensual life *par excellence*. But is it an adequate way of working in a world where the only thing on which most of us agree is that there is no consensus?

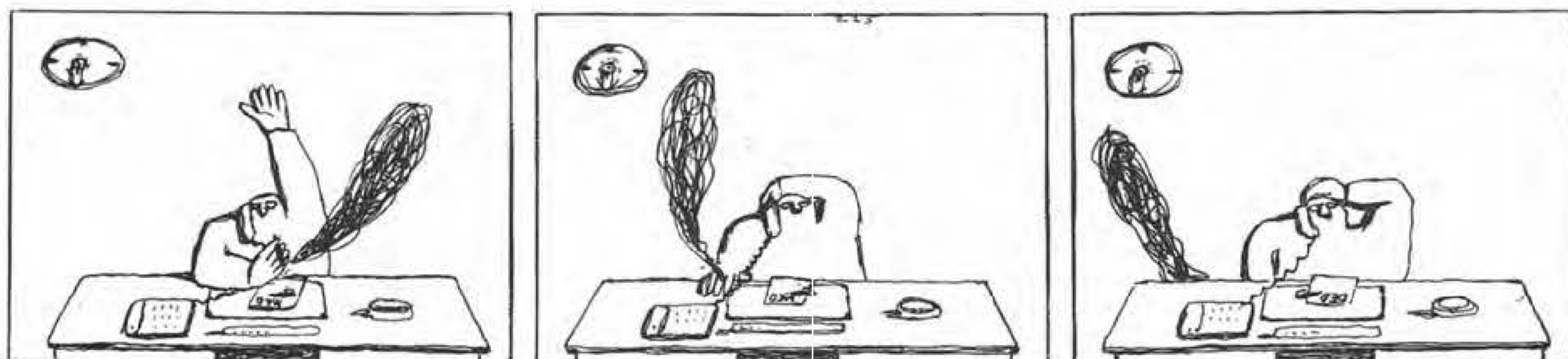
The BBFC's way of working does seem to

perpetuate unexamined anomalies and inconsistencies, even if they are a consequence of an 'admirable' flexibility. If Tom Kalin's film *Swoon* – about the cruel murder of a child – had been submitted after the James Bulger case, it is likely that the BBFC's flexibility would have ensured that certification was delayed. As it was certificated before the case, it can be bought at your local video shop. Films unlikely to touch the mass market seem to be treated more tolerantly than those directed at the hoi polloi – hence the generous treatment of 'arthouse' video releases, laser discs and video-only gay erotica. And while the board does seem sympathetic to the claim that "artistic context" may justify particular sequences in a film wanting a video release, it can hardly square this with its equally strongly held conviction that the specific danger of video technology is that it allows the viewer to decontextualise sequences through rewind and freeze frame.

The practice of classification needs sustained public debate, particularly since the climate of deregulation means that of the various screens in the home – terrestrial TV, satellite TV, cable TV – video is the only one subject to statutory regulation. What is needed is a sustained piece of independent research into these matters, and not the one presently planned which narrows its focus to young offenders in response to the current moral panic. If we are to continue to have "the strictest censorship board in Europe", as Ferman has claimed is the case, then it should be on the basis of widespread, informed debate. There may even be a case for having a full-blown written code if the alternative is the nod and wink that too often determine judgments in Britain.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry tell the press, this studio will resist knee-jerk reactions to these so-called moral guardians. Yes, we've changed the title of "Blood Sausage" to "Breakfast in Bed", cut the gang rape, halved the body count & replaced Ice-T with Chevy, but these are purely creative decisions.'

The climate and Sam Peckinpah... European films and the box office... the retiring Kenneth

The business

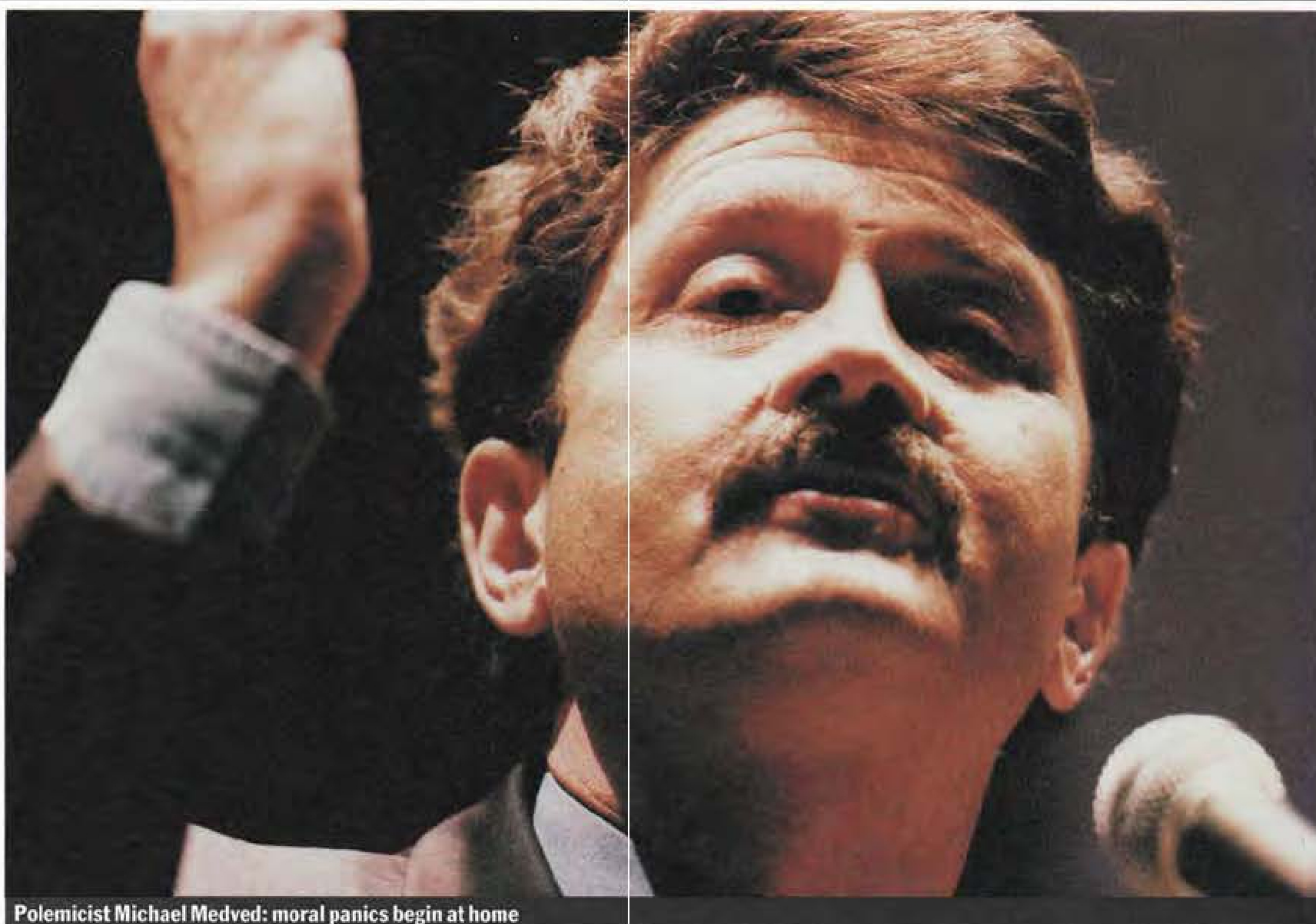
● Michael Medved's controversial tract *Hollywood vs America* may have stirred up a moral backlash, but we shouldn't forget that backlashes rarely happen in full public view. Hollywood's rule is (and has always been); if you can't sell it, don't make it. The marketing department's decision is usually final – and it is not a decision open to much public debate.

Just recently, for instance, Warner Bros decided to do a limited theatrical re-release of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, as part of a marketing campaign for the issue of the film on laser disc. But when the film was submitted to the MPAA for rating (it was R-rated back in 1969), it came back with an NC-17 – "No children under 17 admitted." As justification for the new restrictions, the MPAA cited the "changing climate" in the US. Result: Warners have put the re-release – and the laser disc – on hold. Like a rap record with an advisory sticker, an NC-17 gets into far less markets than an R.

It's not often that a studio gets caught out like this, since the intention of the MPAA when it was first set up in the 30s was to clean up Hollywood before the government did so: self-censorship as a safety valve. Much more common than an unexpected NC-17, therefore, is what happened to Phil Noyce's new thriller, *Sliver*, which stars Sharon Stone and Alec Baldwin. Adapted by Joe (Basic Instinct) Eszterhas from a novel by Ira Levin, *Sliver* is about voyeurism, which means lots of on-screen sex.

As Noyce told the *Los Angeles Times* a couple of months ago, not only is there "a certain candour to the scenes which deal with sexuality", but the film is (or was) also distinctly equal-opportunity when it comes to nudity. "If you counted the square inches of flesh that are bared in the film, you could say that there are more male than female," Noyce observed coyly. Not any more. Candour is fine – 'candour' is what sold *Basic Instinct* – but cocks are something else. Those who saw an early screening at Paramount in mid-March report that this kind of candid exposure is now down to under two seconds. Censorship? Of course not. Noyce's contract specified that he must deliver an R film. Which *Sliver* – with too much of Baldwin on the screen – wouldn't have been.

Sharon Stone may not have picked up an Oscar nomination for her performance in 'Basic Instinct', but her willingness to play along with Eszterhas' and director Paul Verhoeven's idea of the ultimate male wish-fulfilment (wearing no knickers while being interviewed by the LAPD) has brought her a much more meaningful Hollywood accolade: a sharp increase in her price-per-picture. Stone got a measly \$250,000 for 'Basic Instinct'; 'Sliver', on the other hand, brought her \$2.5 million, plus 10 per cent of the gross. And



Polemicist Michael Medved: moral panics begin at home

now, proving that a financial crisis or two has done nothing to blunt his entrepreneurial chutzpah, Dino De Laurentiis has reportedly offered her \$6 million for 'The Immortals'.

Cheeky title, too, since it suggests that the film can't do what most other Dino epics of the last decade have done.

● While German politicians are debating ways of curbing the country's runaway reality television series, US specialist Don Ohlmeyer is fine-tuning his lawyer's response time. By the time night had fallen on the rubble of February's World Trade Center bomb, Mr O's brief had signed up rights to the stories of most of the "heroic people involved" for a TV docudrama. Ohlmeyer, who has already brought his talents to bear on the Dallas air disaster and the 1989 San Francisco earthquake, expects to have the resulting epic, tentatively titled *Twin Towers*, on NBC next month.

At last December's European Film Awards (the "Felixes", if you must) there was controversy over something other than the awfulness of the endless entertainment surrounding the prize-giving. Why, people asked, couldn't the Felixes be more like the Oscars? Why couldn't they do something to boost European films at the box office?

To answer that, you have to be able to deal with another, more basic question: why don't more European films work at the European box office? Here are three pieces of circumstantial evidence.

First, two and a half years ago Italian moguls Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori, whose Penta Film has been hugely successful in Italy, announced the setting up of a new company, PentAmerica, to make big-budget 'American' films with European money. Their first two efforts were Bob Rafelson's 'Man Trouble',

with Jack Nicholson and Ellen Barkin, and 'Folks!', directed by Ted Kotcheff, with Tom Selleck and Don Ameche. Good directors, bankable stars, promising packages, but terrible films. Both performed so dismally at the box office that even the Cecchi Gori admitted they were no good.

Second, two years ago at Cannes, France's biggest film company UGC announced a deal with Warner Bros to make a film that finally emerged earlier this year, after innumerable production hiccups, as 'Arizona Dream'. The director was Emir Kusturica, whose talent no one – on the basis of two of his previous films, 'Father's on a Business Trip' and 'Time of the Gypsies' – would deny. Faye Dunaway, Johnny Depp and Jerry Lewis headed the cast. An ideal combination? Well, in the intervening years Warners backed out, UGC soldiered on alone and the film, with perhaps 20 successful minutes in its 140 minutes' running time, will be lucky to make back a third of what it cost.

Third, five years ago veteran Berlin-based producer Artur Brauner (the man behind Agnieszka Holland's 'Europa, Europa') first told me of his efforts to raise the money to film Thomas Keneally's novel 'Schindler's Ark'. Brauner struggled for another two years before finally giving up: no one wanted to back the film. On 1 March this year, after no noticeable struggle to find the finance, Steven Spielberg began shooting his version of the book in Krakow.

None of these stories is an answer to the question, but all of them certainly point in the right direction.

● Another case in point: Robert Altman – who spent nearly a decade in self-imposed exile in Europe before coming back into vogue with *The Player* – couldn't find the money here to make one of his most

cherished projects. It took the film arm of top US television programme-maker Spelling Entertainment (which also backed *The Player* and Altman's upcoming *Short Cuts*, based on Raymond Carver's stories), to fund *Prêt à porter*, set in the Paris fashion world. The film will shoot in Europe in October. Even top German producer Bernd Eichinger (*The Name of the Rose*) needed US money and a US distribution deal (with Warners) to mount his film version of Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits*, which Oscar and Palme d'Or winner Bille August is shooting in Denmark and Portugal with a cast including Meryl Streep, Jeremy Irons and Glenn Close.

One controversy narrowly avoided at the Berlin Film Festival this February had to do with the nationality of the co-winner of the Golden Bear. Although the film is set in New York, most of the funding for Ang Lee's 'The Wedding Banquet' came from Taiwan's Central Motion Picture Corporation. But as any festival organiser knows, if you want the mainland Chinese to come to your event, you don't make a big thing about Taiwanese films. Five years ago in Cannes, the entire Chinese delegation locked themselves in their hotel rooms until the Directors Fortnight took down the Taiwanese flag flying over the Old Palais. As it is, 'The Wedding Banquet' is listed in the Berlin catalogue as "Taiwan, China" – which apparently keeps everyone happy, since it implies to one side that the island is a province of the mainland, and to the other that it isn't.

There were some 1,300 films being sold at Cannes last year – either screened, or else dangled in front of buyers as an idea needing only a bit of their money to become a reality. Of these, 78 – exactly 6 per cent – were British

films or co-productions, making the UK the fourth largest supplier of films to the festival (after the US – which accounted for over 40 per cent – France and Italy).

Not that you'd be aware of this as you walked along the Croisette or wandered through the market area in the Palais des Festivals. The Germans have their Export-Union, the Italians have SACIS, even Romaniafilm takes a stand. And all of them work hard to promote their country's films. The Italians have a whole building to themselves, the Germans have their own cinema, the Spaniards and the Scandinavians book one screen in a rue d'Antibes multiplex throughout the festival. But not the British. It's true that since 1988 there has been the British Pavilion, but that has always seemed to me to function more as a place where the British can relax and forget they're abroad – a sort of pub *sur la plage* – rather than a promotional centre for British films.

Late last summer, though, there were mutterings about setting up a semi-official film body to promote (and perhaps even sell) British films abroad. Not a lot happened until this spring, when there began to be rumours that the agency would become a part of the British Film Commission. Now while I yield to no one in my admiration for the ingenious foldaway display stands the BFC sends (often, it seems, in lieu of a human presence) to foreign festivals, I think it might take more to sell British films abroad than colour snaps of British landscapes like the ones they used to have in railway carriages. British films currently account for around 5.5 per cent of the European market in terms of the number of films released – almost exactly half France's market share. And Britain is the

only country in Europe without a proper film promotion agency. Any connection?

● Much press coverage was devoted to the death from Aids just before this spring's César awards of French director Cyril Collard, whose *Les Nuits fauves* (*Savage Nights*) scooped most of the main prizes. Much less space (basically, a *Guardian* obituary by David Robinson, a month after the event) has been devoted to the death, shortly before, of Israeli director Amos Guttman, whose film *Amazing Grace* – the story of a teenage boy's love for an older neighbour who is dying of Aids – won top prize at the 1992 Jerusalem Film Festival.

Here are four words that don't often come together: 'low profile' and 'Kenneth Branagh'. They can, however, accurately be used about the new Disney film, 'Swing Kids', in which the hope of the British cinema appears but is not credited. In 'Swing Kids', Branagh plays the (quite substantial) part of a Gestapo officer in a story about a group of pre-war German youths whose love of big-band music is not shared by the Nazis.

According to Branagh's agent, there was no "reasonable formula" for billing him in the film: he doesn't play a leading role, but his part is not a cameo. Branagh "didn't want to take anything away" from the young stars, so he left his name off. 'Swing Kids' opened in the US on 6 March to almost universally negative reviews. But that, apparently had nothing to do with the decision.

● Ever since Marlon Brando reportedly included an 11-minute shot of the ranch house in the first cut of his directorial debut, *One-*

Eyed Jacks ("That's the house where the boy lives: you gotta establish that!"), I have privately awarded my own personal prize, the Marlon, to those performers who have persuaded someone to finance a film that no one else would have got past the doorman. Last year's winner was Arnold Schwarzenegger, who conjured up Ted Turner's backing to direct a remake of *Christmas in Connecticut*.

The race for the 1993 Marlon, meanwhile, is starting well. Contenders so far include Tom Cruise, who will direct a segment of the upcoming *Fallen Angels* anthology (based on stories by Raymond Chandler, Jim Thompson and Cornell Woolrich) for US cable network Showtime; Lou Diamond Philips, who will do the erotic thriller *Dangerous Touch* (in which he also stars) for independent production company CineTel; and Gary Oldman, set to make *Lords of the Urban Jungle* in London later this year. I'll keep you up to date on developments.

Freed from the necessity of being interviewed every year by Sunday magazine reporters about the demise of the British film industry and the fact that no one here takes him seriously, Steve Woolley has become the toast of Hollywood, recently being named producer of the year by the Producers Guild of America for 'The Crying Game' ("PGA to Game's Woolley: Bully!", headlined 'Daily Variety'). In addition to signing a deal with Jodie Foster's company Egg Productions, Woolley is now working for the umpteenth time with 'Crying Game' director Neil Jordan



Woolley bullies Hollywood at last

to film Anne Rice's cult novel 'Interview with the Vampire'. "Finally!" those who read Julia Phillips' 'You'll Never Eat Lunch in this Town Again' are likely to breathe, since during her brief periods of deal-making lucidity, Phillips twice tried to option the book: once in 1984 and again in 1989 for producer David Geffen, with David Lynch as a possible director.

By that stage, the script combined the original novel with its sequel, 'The Vampire Lestat', which is how Woolley and Jordan will do it, for Geffen and Warner Bros. Brad Pitt is currently scheduled to play the vampire, but a previous announcement by Geffen that Daniel Day-Lewis would play Lestat proved a touch premature: Day-Lewis, fired back his agent, had not committed, had not read the script and was not currently available anyway. Not, of course, that any of this would ever stop a good producer using a star's name to give a project weight. Least of all a master publicist like Menahem Golan, late of Cannon, now of the prolifically successful – or at any rate prolific – 21st Century Film Corporation.

At Cannes last year, in order to promote 21st's remake of 'Crime and Punishment', Golan plastered the Croisette with pictures of Jon Voight in a furry Russian hat with a Red Army star on the front. "I don't want to confirm anything that is not fact," declared Golan, demurely restricting himself to the merest on-the-record hint that River Phoenix and Faye Dunaway would soon join the film's cast. Also close to signing was "a major American director: perhaps British would be more accurate," added Golan, non-factually. 'Crime and Punishment' finally started shooting in Moscow this February with a cast headed by John Hurt, Vanessa Redgrave and Crispin Glover. The director is Menahem Golan.

● And finally, only in Hollywood... First, there was a script called *Hamlet* about a pig who works as a cop. Next, there was a concept called *Cyrano*, about a dog which is sent as part of a witness protection programme to live with an unusual family. Finally, there was a studio which had options on both. The studio really wanted to "make a pig movie" (a studio source definitely said this), but preferred the script about the dog. So now the dog script has the go-ahead, but with the dog's part played by the pig. The studio, fittingly, is Fox.

FRENCH NOTES

France's new prime minister Edouard Balladur has chosen two men to step into the shoes of Jack Lang, the recently deposed socialist minister of culture and communications. Jack Lang's designer-suited shadow had cast itself over what seemed an ever-expanding empire, extending to education and encompassing many of the *grands projets* planned by François Mitterrand as monuments to his rule. Now Balladur has abandoned the super-ministry, returning the ministries of culture and communications to their former status as separate domains under separate ministers.

Jacques Toubon, the newly appointed minister for culture, and Alain Carignon, the minister for communications, will have a struggle to live down the reputation of the last representative of the centre-right to inhabit 3 rue Valois: François Léotard. Léotard was loathed by the cultural establishment, largely for his role in privatising the state television channel TF1. He was also regarded as a lightweight when it came to cultural matters: so much so that during his office the ever-popular Lang carved himself a role as cultural minister-in-exile and became the media's darling,

hijacking almost all the attention.

With the new regime came fears that right-wing pressure to curb the "overspending" and "cultural excesses" of the Lang era and to bring in the loss adjusters might lead to the appointment of grey-men-in-suits who would be insensitive to the needs of their offices. But both Toubon and Carignon have respectable track records in the sphere of culture, and have swiftly moved to calm fears that the new regime will bring in sweeping cutbacks. Toubon, whose ministry encompasses film, has already committed himself to continuing to dedicate a 1 per cent share of national expenditure to culture, an achievement that is one of the cornerstones of Jack Lang's legacy. Carignon, whose ministry will include broadcasting, has given assurances that changes will be minimal. In the short term, the two men are unlikely to initiate any major revolutions, although there will undoubtedly be some rapid shuffling of personnel in the various regulatory funding bodies. There is, however, plenty to be done.

While Lang's reign boasted many notable achievements, the audiovisual industry suffered in some ways at his

hand. While under the combined super-ministry the film industry was supported by considerable government subsidies, the television sector floundered, relegated to a subservient role. Broadcasters and producers struggled as subsidies were poured into programmes, but outlets in the increasingly fragmented system became harder and harder to find. The most notable casualty was La Cinq, the commercial channel which went bankrupt last year.

One sector which might benefit under the right-wing government is public broadcasting. Eager to ease pressure on the privatised TF1, the new coalition is keen to raise the licence fee and force public channels to pay more attention to their public service remits instead of competing head-on with the commercial channels. The right is also keen to introduce a rival service to contain the success of the privately owned movie and sports channel Canal Plus. They argue that Canal Plus, chaired by longstanding Mitterrand associate André Rousselet, has been granted excessive privileges, particularly in its access to new French feature films.

Charles Brown

With a bag full of weapons, a middle-aged white male takes revenge on a world that oppresses him.

Carol Clover reflects on why 'Falling Down' matters

WHITE NOISE



● *Falling Down* tells the story of one day in the life of a laid-off defence worker (Michael Douglas). The eerie opening shots show him sitting in his car in a standstill traffic jam on a sweltering Los Angeles morning. Jaw set, face emotionless, forehead trickling with sweat, he takes in the sights and sounds around him – car stereos, a woman putting on lipstick, someone shouting into a cellular phone, a billboard, people arguing. Finally he moves: opens the door, gets out of his car, clambers over an embankment and sets off on foot across tracts of LA not usually seen by freeway commuters. Like Odysseus, he is heading home, except that instead of Scylla and Charybdis there are chicano gangs and homeless people, and instead of Penelope waiting patiently in Ithaca there is a former wife with a restraining order in Venice Beach. D-Fens, as he comes to be known after his license plate, always had a short fuse, and this is the morning he blew. “This is not a bad guy,” director Joel Schumacher says, “but he’s had it.” He cuts a ragged swath through the urban wilderness, leaving behind him a trail of corpses and frightened witnesses. A cop named Prendergast (Robert Duvall), who has tracked his movements since morning, finally stops him on the Venice pier. Arms raised in surrender, D-Fens utters his final, incredulous question: “I’m the bad guy?”

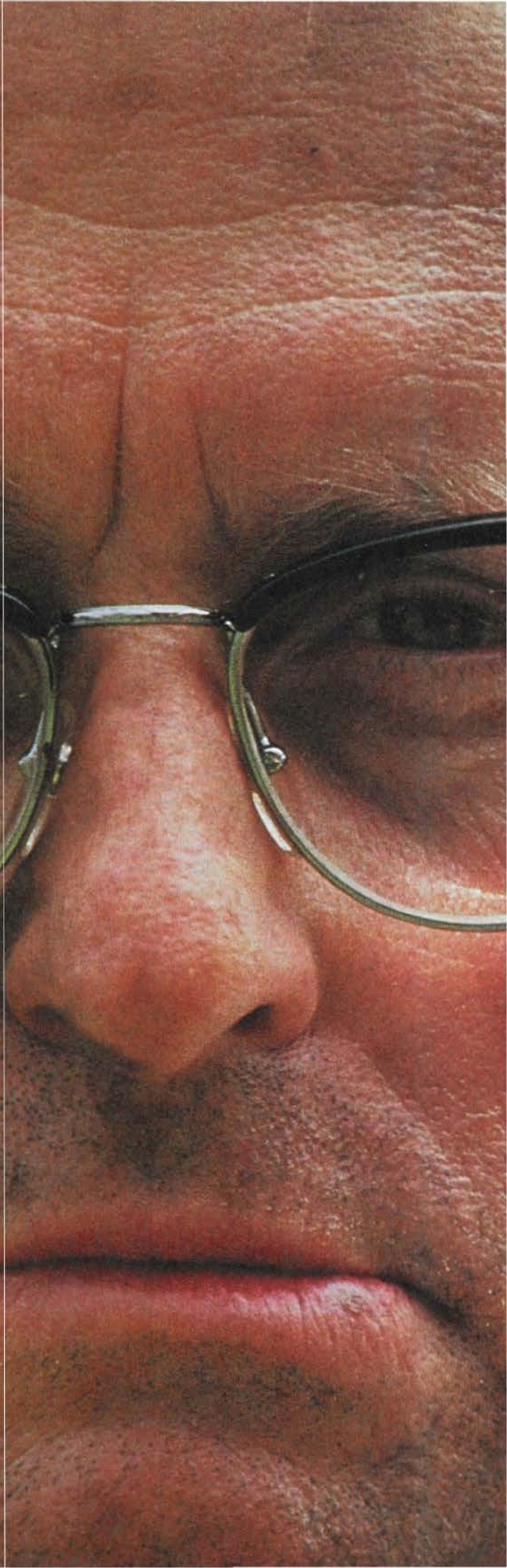
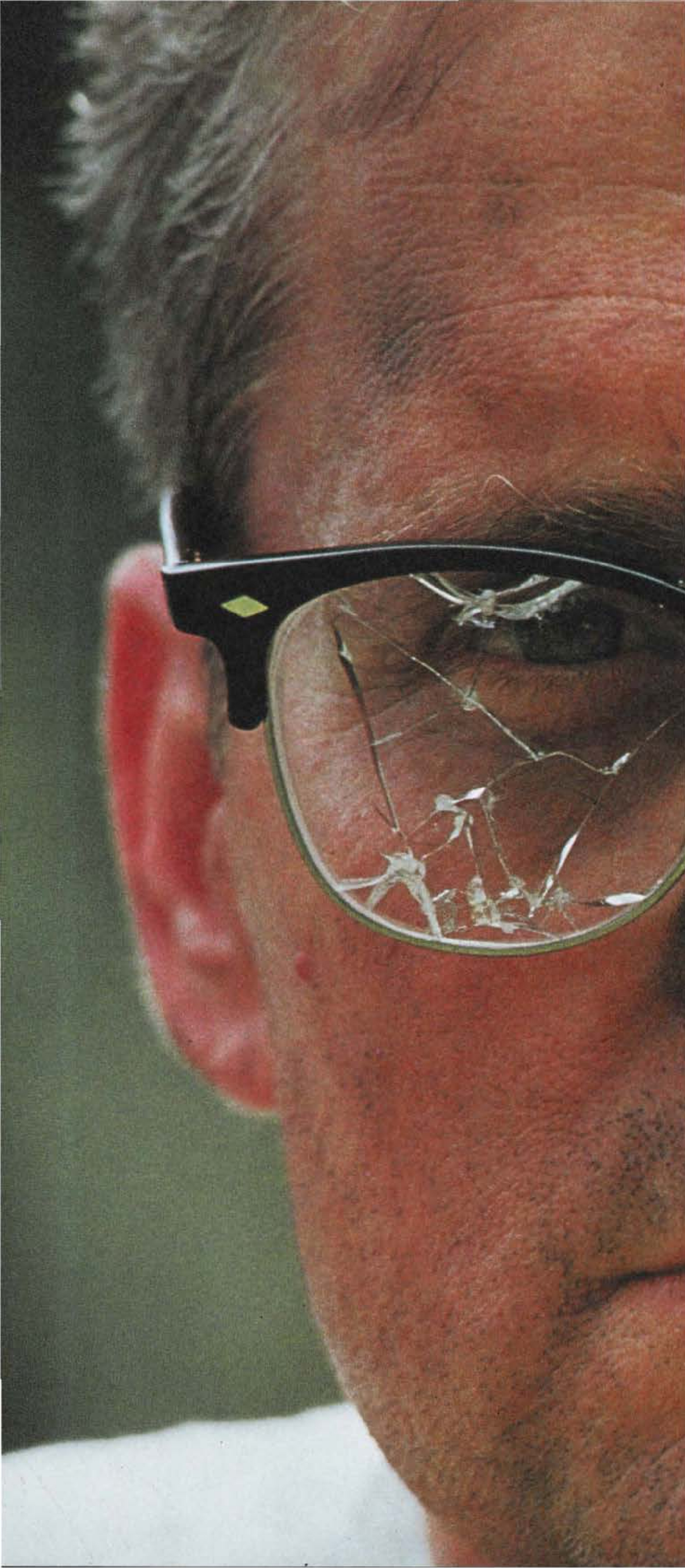
The critical reaction in the US to *Falling Down* is itself a study in confusion. A few reviewers

have praised the film. Most, however, have dismissed it as yet another meanspirited product of the Reagan-Bush backlash, underneath its glitz nothing more than a crude vigilante picture, appealing to the worst in us all.

The New York Times carried two reviews: an appreciative one by Vincent Canby, who thought the film smart satire, and a scathing one by Caryn James, who pronounced it irritating nonsense. The one thing that is clear is that audiences are going to see it in large numbers and, once there, are responding with shouts and applause. For better or for worse, *Falling Down* is one of those films (and Michael Douglas has acted in more than his fair share of them) that has hit an American nerve. But which nerve is it this time?

There is an old joke about the Lone Ranger and Tonto atop a hill, surrounded on all sides by thousands of armed Indian warriors heading straight for them. “What should we do now, Tonto?” the Lone Ranger asks. Tonto is silent for a moment, and then answers, grimly, “What do you mean we, white man?” It is a joke that still resonates in American social discourse, haunting, among other things, the current concern over the fracturing of the polity into identity-based groups – a concern summed up in the question “how wide the circle of we?” That concern, and some form of that question, haunt *Falling Down*. D-Fens’ “I’m the bad guy?” is as packed with social meanings as his gym bag ►

When the tough get going:
Michael Douglas, a laid-off
defence worker and average
white male – who decides
that he’s ‘had enough’



◀ is with weapons. The question is: who is the "I" in that sentence, and why is he so upset?

Midway into the picture, D-Fens goes into an army surplus store to buy a pair of boots. The owner scrutinises him as he enters and, taking off his dark glasses and earphones, follows him to the back of the store. "I'm Nick," he says, "what can I do you for?" Moments later, a police car pulls up and an officer enters and asks the owner whether he has seen a white man wearing a white shirt and tie and carrying a gym bag. No, the owner says as D-Fens lies low in a dressing room. When the officer is gone, D-Fens asks the owner why he lied. "You're my friend," the owner says, a little too intensely. The rest of the sequence will reveal the owner as a homophobic, racist, anti-environmental, misogynist neo-Nazi and will end with D-Fens calling him a "sick asshole", shooting him, and going back out on to the street to continue his way home.

The police came because Prendergast, looking at his maps down at the station, figured something out. First there was a report that a Korean grocer's store had been smashed up – but not robbed – by a white man wearing a white shirt and tie. Prendergast is intrigued by the description and when a report of an equally odd incident in an adjacent neighbourhood comes in, he guesses immediately that its perpetrator too was a white man in a white shirt and tie. When his partner Sandra goes to investigate a hold-up at the Whammyburger restaurant – where again nothing is stolen – Prendergast tells her to call him immediately if it is a white man in a white shirt and tie.

Prendergast and the neo-Nazi have something in common: they both 'know' D-Fens even before they meet him. The fact that the neo-Nazi's knowledge is not quite right (for D-Fens is not a card-carrying Nazi) should not detract from the fact that he *thinks* he knows him. Prendergast, however, knows exactly, and is able to deduce not only D-Fens' direction and destination, but also what no one else can fathom from his unorthodox actions: their motivation. The set-up brings to mind a Dutch film of some years ago, *A Question of Silence* (directed by Marleen Gorris), in which some women browsing in a dress shop suddenly, on the slightest of provocations, join together and beat to death the male owner. The women have never met before this moment; what joins them in common cause is their silent and sudden recognition of themselves as members of the category Woman, and therefore as angry victims of the category Man, of which the crowing shopkeeper seems such an exemplary representative.

Falling Down has been widely reviewed as an Everyman tale and D-Fens characterised as "Joe Normal", "average citizen", "universal hero", or simply "all of us". Many of the irritations and social ills in D-Fens' awful day are indeed things that can affect and offend anyone: the traffic jam, the annoying bumper stickers ("How Am I Driving? Call 1-800-EAT SHIT"), the ludicrous uniforms and protocol of the Whammyburger restaurant, the shopkeeper's refusal to give change, the general rudeness of all towards all. These are Everyone scenes, and they provide some of the film's most trenchant

moments. But to let *Falling Down* go at that misses a crucial point – in much the way that the state authorities in *A Question of Silence* miss the point when they construe the shopkeeper's murder as motivated by insanity or class anger. Would the neo-Nazi and Prendergast have 'known' a woman who had done the same things, or a non-white man, or a disabled person, or whatever?

Three white men, three zones on a continuum. Reviewers have stumbled over the figure of the neo-Nazi, whose pathological hatreds seem so hyperbolically drawn. The excess comes into focus if we imagine the story without him. He secures a position we might otherwise be inclined to ascribe to D-Fens, whose words and deeds we might construe as too close to fascism for comfort. By locating genocidal viciousness and insanity in the neo-Nazi (and indeed having D-Fens kill him, moralising about freedom of speech as he does so), the film can define D-Fens as your average short-tempered neighbour who just happened to break one day. And what blows then is his self-control, not his sense of reality. No Travis Bickle, this. *Falling Down*'s story is precisely not that of *Taxi Driver* (with which it has been widely compared): for better or worse, its whole effect

When the officer is gone, D-Fens calls the neo-Nazi a "sick asshole", shoots him, and goes back out on to the street to continue on his way home

depends on seeing D-Fens not as a vet descending into madness, but as a tax-paying citizen whose anger allows him to see, with preternatural clarity, the madness in the society around him. The neo-Nazi is established as a "sick asshole" to make it clear that D-Fens is neither an asshole nor sick. He may be out of control, but he is "not a bad guy" (again Schumacher), and he does see truly.

As with the neo-Nazi and D-Fens, so in muted form with D-Fens and Prendergast. D-Fens is extreme and dies and Prendergast is moderate and survives, but they are doubles in the same play, and it is D-Fens' ballistic reaction that enables Prendergast to let off a little steam. But Prendergast's relation to whiteness and maleness is no less decisive for being more gently drawn. The first time we lay eyes on him, he too is sitting in the same traffic jam staring fixedly through his windshield at a billboard. The left side is obscured by trees, but the exposed part features a tanned woman in a bikini next to the rubric "White is for laundry". Presumably some product like sun lotion or a Hawaiian vacation is on the hidden side of the billboard, but without that as a material anchor, the words drift into a bellicose racial register. If that were not enough, a graffiti artist has drawn on to the female figure's formidable cleavage, as if trapped there, a tiny cartoon man calling out "Help me!" It is this billboard, much later in the film, that Prender-

gast will spot again and that will serve as the missing piece of the investigation, the key to the pattern of behaviour that to everyone else seems random or insane or both.

Along this double axis of race and sex, Prendergast's story too plays itself out. Certainly Prendergast's relation to his wife, a needy woman who has manipulated him into sacrificing his reputation at work and agreeing to a retirement he does not want, is neatly captured in the cartoon man's plight. And Prendergast's too is a day of racial encounters, starting with his being chided by an Asian colleague for asking him what the Korean grocer is saying ("I happen to be a Japanese, in case you didn't notice!"). Lest we miss the equation between him and D-Fens, it is spelled out for us in the scene in which the girl Angelina is being interrogated about the incident in which her chicano gangster friends are killed. None of her interlocutors believes her when she says the man in question was a white guy with a baseball bat. Except for Prendergast. Moving in closer, he asks for a description. "He was like you," she replies, "except taller and he had hair." "Did he have a white shirt and tie?" Prendergast asks. He is, at that moment and throughout most of a film in which "white shirt and tie" has the status of a leitmotif, wearing a white shirt and tie.

Falling Down is hardly the first movie to feature a white man flailing self-righteously in a sea of people who are either not male or not white or neither and who are messing up his game. What distinguishes it from the run-of-the-mill backlash fantasy is the demographic precision with which it defines that man's consciousness.

It goes something like this. The Average White Male is the guy everybody is mad at and wants compensation from – the guy who pays the bills whether he personally deserves to or not and whether he can afford to or not. The Average White Male is surrounded by people who have claimed themselves as his social victims and clamour for entitlement. By women who kick men out of the family and the home and expect child support (put aside for a moment the fact that D-Fens was evidently something of a problem husband and father), and by women who (like Prendergast's wife) play femininity (and feminism) for all it is worth to keep their husbands in a state of guilt and control. By chicano gang members who demand a 'toll' from anyone who chances into those chunks of Los Angeles they have claimed as their own. By old people kept alive by the miracles of modern medicine, drawing Social Security all the way. (When D-Fens lets the elderly golfer die of a heart attack by keeping him from his pills, he pulls an imaginary plug on all old people living beyond their time and on the Average White Male's chit.) By Asian shopkeepers who self-righteously overcharge. By homeless people who bully and lie through their teeth. By gay men. (Lesbians and disabled people are oddly missing from D-Fens' hit list.) By blacks who shout racism whenever they don't get what they want. (The black man picketing the Savings and Loan believes that the phrase used on his loan denial, "not economi-



Knowing yourself: Robert Duvall as Prendergast, the cop who recognises the killer even before they meet

cally viable", is code for racial discrimination, but it soon becomes clear that D-Fens qualifies for the same designation.) Indeed, if we are to trust the neo-Nazi's phantasmatic account, by "black bucks" who pin the Average White Male to the ground and shout "Give it to me! Give it to me! Give it to me!" as they literally rape him.

Likewise property. The Average White Male is the guy who theoretically owns the world but in practice, in this account, not only has no turf of his own but has been closed out of the turf of others. D-Fens breaches two high walls in the course of his long walk home. One is the wall of a country club, where he meets with elderly golfers (arguably coded Jewish) who shout "Get off my golf course! What am I paying my fucking dues for if guys can walk all over my golf course?" The other is the wall outside a plastic surgeon's mansion, where he encounters a caretaker he mistakes for the owner and who in turn mistakes him for the "security man". (Even Average White Males have trouble telling each other from the enemy, it seems. When D-Fens learns that the man he is facing is a trespasser like himself – the caretaker is using the plastic surgeon's barbecue on the sly for a picnic with his wife and child – his rage evaporates and he slips into confessional tone.)

But it's not only the rich who have walled him out; it's the poor as well. What he thought was graffiti art – on the rubble on which he is sitting to rest his feet – is in fact a sign, his chicano interlocutors inform him: "Private fucking property, no fucking trespassing." ("A pissing ground, is that what it is?" D-Fens responds.) Even the homeless man claims territory: "What right do you have to walk through my park? I live here. This is my home, this is my park, what right do you have walking through it?" And, of course, the home towards which D-Fens is so single-mindedly making his way is also off limits: "This is my house now," his former wife tells him, buttressed by an order that

stipulates that he may not come within 100 feet (or maybe yards – the wife can't remember). For this, the white male fought for his country? As D-Fens himself sums it up to the caretaker: "I lost my job. Actually I didn't lose it; it lost me. I'm overeducated and underskilled – or maybe it's the other way around, I forget. I'm obsolete. I'm 'not economically viable'. I can't even support my own kid." In the end, the Average White Male amounts to nothing more than a life-insurance policy, and in the film's climactic scene, as a last wretched act of support, he arranges for that to be liquidated too.

It's not hard to see what's wrong with this picture. Even Average White Males are better off than their Average White Wives or than Average Black Males or whatever; hold for class, in other words, and they still come out on top. But what interests me here is not the fairness or unfairness of the portrait. It is the simple fact that a portrait has been drawn and that the lines are where they are. For the group of which this group is construed as a part is not just any category. It is the great unmarked or default category of western culture, the one that never needed to define itself, the standard against which other categories have calculated their difference. In much the same way that Protestants of Anglo-Saxon stock were once synonymous with 'Americans' but came, at some point in this century, to be marked as one category among many, with its own peculiarities and eventually its own name (WASP), so now guys like D-Fens (and his worse version the neo-Nazi and his better version Prendergast) are being separated from the master category and outfitted with an identity and consciousness of their own. Not all white shirts are alike. Some are short-sleeved and have "nerd packs" in the pocket. And if we are to take seriously D-Fens' change of clothing at the army surplus store, white shirts of this kind are just one temper tantrum away from becoming brown shirts.

How exactly does one go about carving an interest group out of the default category? The same way as other interest groups made themselves: by claiming oppression. Victim status is the coin of the realm as far as identity is concerned. The Average White Male claim is bankrupt, both fiscal and spiritual. In the Whammyburger scene, D-Fens holds up the flaccid, colourless burger he has been handed and, gesturing to the juicy version on the sign, puts the question to his captive audience: "What is wrong with this picture?" (After a long pause, a small black boy raises his hand.) So too the Average White Male: in the public imagination infinitely endowed with wealth and privilege, but in the real individual case, running on fumes: nerves fraying, guilt wearing thin, and down to an insurance policy.

To dismiss this as Reagan-Bush attitudinising, as most reviewers have done, does not do justice to the real sense of anger, grievance and pathos that attends the D-Fens story and that clearly affects audiences. There is, I think, something like Average White Male consciousness in the making out there. The men's movement is part of it (especially the throwing off the shackles of responsibility and guilt part), Joe Bob Briggs is part of it, and publications

like *Heterodoxy* are part of it. A recent issue of this last speaks of the Clinton administration's mentality as one that "is forgiving of America-bashing because it has been nurtured on a vision of the rampant white, heterosexual male – a synecdoche for America the bad – running roughshod over the country and the world." It declares that a certain man was a "walking bull's eye" for charges of child abuse "because he was a white middle-aged male and a serviceman in addition to his other defects." It fantasises a PBS series, hosted by Bill Moyers, entitled *Damn You White Man*, which iterates in 13 hours the annihilation of all the "rich and varied cultures" of North America by white men ("guaranteed to induce intense guilt in anyone of Northern European ancestry"). *Heterodoxy* is not a neo-Nazi publication (though some readers may find it a short stretch). It is reasonably articulate (within the mode of heavy mockery) and sometimes trenchantly hits the point, though arguably it is just as self-righteous as the PCnesses it broadsides. "The cultural equivalent of a drive-by shooting," it calls itself. *Falling Down* is pretty much the cinematic equivalent of the same thing – and from the vantage of pretty much the same constituency.

Canby regards *Falling Down* as quintessentially American, a film that "couldn't possibly have been made anywhere else in the world today." It is more particularly Californian – California being not only a traditional hotbed of identity politics (notable recent examples: the gay/lesbian and disabled movements), but an economy especially hard hit by unemployment (much of it related to defence cutbacks), and also, of course, a population in the process of dramatic 'colouring' (within the next six years, whites will constitute less than half of its 32 million inhabitants). If ever a place were ripe for popular fantasies about Average White Males resigning from public responsibility, 90s California is it.

In his new book *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America*, Robert Hughes writes that "Never before in human history were so many acronyms pursuing identity. It's as though all human encounter were one big sore spot, inflamed with opportunities to unwittingly give, and truculently receive, offence." Contradictorily enough, however, the book goes on to enact the very process it decries, in claiming an identity and victim status for yet another group – the group that was supposed to be beyond the fray. Hughes ventures the possibility that "By the time whites get guilty enough to call themselves 'European-Americans,' it will be time to junk the whole lingo of nervous divisionism; everyone, black, yellow, red and white, can revert to being plain 'Americans' again, as well they might." If *Falling Down* is any measure, the moment is upon us – but there is no discernible guilt here, only fury, and there is no sense whatsoever of reversal and regrouping in the offing. *Falling Down's* answer to the question "how wide the circle of we?" would seem to be both "narrower than ever" and "what do you mean, we?" – spoken by more and more people, in increasingly snarling tones, echoing into the future.

'Falling Down' opens on 4 June

SEX VIOLENCE AND VIDEOTAPE

Do the media deprave? Is screen violence a threat to British culture? Or is the current panic, like others before it, a mask for a project with a political agenda? By Martin Barker



"TV *Casualty* in protest storm... MPs in call for clamp on BBC." (*Bristol Evening Post*)

Just what should we make of this excess of criticism and complaint? The BBC is accused over the (brilliant) last episode of *Casualty*. A *Woman's Own* survey reveals that most women feel threatened by violence on film and television. An 11-year-old girl who has watched *The Silence of the Lambs* more than 100 times earns a front-page lead in the *Daily Mirror* for it. The BBFC seems reluctant to give video classification certificates to *Bad Lieutenant* and *Reservoir Dogs*. *World in Action* (15 February 1992) updates on the dangers of video games for children. No question, times are bad.

Meanwhile, 'horror' at the sad, sad death of James Bulger. 'Horror' at the pitch invasion at Manchester City. 'Horror' at the news that cruelty to animals has reached new heights. Small wonder the government needs to put true British culture back at the centre of things: sort out that national curriculum, and while you're doing it, take out the media studies element – we can well do without it.

The idyllic past

"We all know that there is a very great increase in juvenile crime... It is the considered opinion of those who know that this is largely due to the effect of unsuitable films upon children and the youth of today." (The Conservative Women's Committee, 1938)

The resurgence of fears about the effects of 'the media' ought to prompt us to look again at the history of such fears, from which there are valuable lessons to be learned. From the penny dreadfuls (Britain) and dime novels (US) of the late nineteenth century, through the street theatres and music hall of the turn of the century, early cinema, the 50s crime and horror comics, paperback novels, television, video nasties, to video games, the same litany of fears has been endlessly rehearsed. Geoffrey Pearson has shown in *Hooligan – a History of Respectable Fears* the cycle whereby each generation recalls the world of 25 years ago as idyllically crime-free, family-secure, safe, warm and humane – forgetting that their parents at that time were referring back another 25 years to a period... where their parents.... The above quote from a period celebrated by Tories today as a time when the poor suffered their unemployment without turning to crime has an almost nostalgic ring. So it is important we recall this cycle when we try to evaluate what is happening now.

Yet history never simply repeats itself, and the circumstances of each panic about the media have been importantly different. The campaign of the 1860s-80s against penny dreadfuls was coupled with a rise in the conscious regulation of working-class culture and pleasures – encapsulated in the 1870 Schools Act – and with the promulgation of imperialist ideology. This shift was typified in the transition from *Wild Boys of London* (whose printing plates were smashed in a police raid in 1873) to Jack Harkaway, who did his rampaging overseas, alongside Henty's Heroes, Kingston's Kids and The Ballantyne Boys. Music hall too reinforced imperialist thinking. Respectable halls, with

their 'jingo' songs, sought a cross-class, celebratory audience, while the panics about the more chaotic working-class halls led to close policing of these 'dens of vice'.

Early worries about the power of cinema to corrupt occurred within the context of the rising debate about 'English' as culture and form of literature, a debate which resulted in the Newbolt Report of 1919 which set out a new approach to the curriculum that would produce a 'national culture'. The same concerns provided a justification for the creation of the British Board of Film Classification, among whose early criteria was that "white men may not be shown in a state of degradation amidst native surroundings." As critics have pointed out, early cinema censorship combined an urgent desire to regulate sexuality for the sake of the nation's breeding with the aim of preventing anything that broached 'politics'.

By the 50s the left too was tainted. The campaign against crime and horror comics owed much of its energy to the anti-American-inspired investment of communist-party funds from some 20 countries. Opposition to the interference of 'American cultural imperialism' with 'British cultural heritage' was transformed into a defence of 'children' against 'horror' – a transmogrification which made it possible for a chorus of Communist, Labour and Conservatives to cheer the introduction of a regulatory Act of Parliament in 1955.

The emergence of a campaign against the corrupting impact of television in the early 70s owed much to the fact that the BBC was perceived as redefining its role from establishment pillar to satirical sniper. It is no coincidence that the Festival of Light, the anti-abortion movements and the campaign to clean up television occurred simultaneously. And so on.

Among the continuities such a history reveals is the willing of magical powers on the media – sometimes quite literally. At the height of the video nasties campaign of 1983/4, the *Daily Mirror* reported an attack on a horse in the Home Counties: "A local police officer said that the attacker was a maniac who could be affected by video nasties or a new moon" (3 January 1984). And while the idea that Peter Sut-

cliffe might have been influenced in his actions by the Bible is discounted, despite the fact that Sutcliffe himself claimed it as his inspiration, Mark Austin is deemed to have been encouraged to commit rape by *I Spit On Your Grave* – even though the movie condemns rape and the attackers are avenged by the victim.

Losing control

A fear of the visual is another running theme. To see is to become enmeshed, to lose control of one's critical faculties. I find it hard to think of a piece of empirical research – and god knows, there is enough putative research to spread around – that has tested the idea that to see something is more directly influential on subsequent actions than to hear it or read about it. But even if there were, the claims about an image's power for evil rely to a disturbing degree on prior categories.

Leading 50s anti-comics campaigner Fredric Wertham reproduced in his vastly influential book *Seduction of the Innocent* a cover of a comic showing a hanging man – dangerous stuff. Wertham was also a serious collector of modern art, having in his collection a George Grosz cartoon of a hanging man. Art into life won't go. Comics into life will go, and corrupt. My point is a simple one. Those who attack 'the media' impute to them power to deprave because they have categorised them as certain kinds of culture. Hence the significance of the frequent recurrence of the phrase "the popular culture" in Michael Medved's recent book, *Hollywood vs America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*.

There is also a curious mismatch of causes and solutions, which is endemic to moral panics about the media. In 1954 the *Daily Mail* reported on a New Zealand government pamphlet on crime comics that was delivered to every home as a spur to a general election campaign the Conservatives looked likely to lose. "Causes of delinquency included: parents drinking at children's parties, high wages for adolescents; and mothers going out to work. Remedies should include: Tighter control or banning of sex, crime and horror publications and films; training policewomen to deal ►

MORAL PANICS

"We do not often see an account of a girl committing a serious fault through her reading. But let us go into the houses of the poor, and try to discover what is the effect on the maiden mind of the trash the maiden buys. If we were to trace the matter to its source, we should probably find that the higher-flown conceits and pretensions of the young girls of the period, their dislike of manual work and love of freedom, spring largely from notions imbibed in the course of a perusal of their penny fictions." (Edward Salmon, 1888)

"Before these children's greedy eyes with heartless indiscriminate horrors unimaginable are presented night after night. Terrific massacres, horrible catastrophes, motor-car smashes, public hangings, lynchings. All who care for the moral well-being and

education of the child will set their faces like flint against this new form of excitement." ('The Times', 12 April 1913)

"I see no point in thrusting violence into the minds of 6-10 year olds, and this is certainly the age-group who buy these comics. If children read these now, what they read will be remembered, as in my own case I still remember Robot Archie and Dan Dare from the 'Lion' and 'Eagle'. Children should not be 'wrapped in cotton wool', but let them have their childhood and find out about the cruel world in their own time." (Letter in 'Retail Newsagent', 1976)

"Britain fought the last World War against Hitler to defeat a creed so perverted that it spawned such horrors in awful truth. Now the nation allows our

own children to be nurtured on these perverted horrors under the guise of 'entertainment'. Are we insane? Are we bent on rotting our own society from within? Are we determined to spur to a gallop the forces of decadence that threaten to drag us down?" ('Daily Mail', 1 July 1983)

"With this contemptuous dismissal of the patriotic instincts of his fellow countrymen, Mr Cusack offers one more example of Hollywood's disdainful attitude towards its audience. Show business sophisticates may have 'nothing else to believe in', but the majority of Americans maintain their faith and pride in a wide range of national symbols and institutions – emphatically including the armed services of the United States." (Michael Medved, 1992)

◀ with girl offenders; and making radio serials emphasise 'Crime does not pay' (22 September 1954). What has always fascinated me about this quote is not that the causes and solutions are so wholly separate, but that they can be linked at all. Yet the link is that the state, or its agencies, must step in to recreate order – a demand for intervention on a grand scale because 'culture' is no longer self-regulating.

Most discussions are not as accidentally honest about their logic as this. But it does not take much to see the analogy with the attempts to 'explain' the Brixton riots of 1981 as "copycat riots", or with Medved's blaming of television for the 1992 Los Angeles riot, without mentioning the police beating of Rodney King, which was, of course, also shown on television (ah, but that would imply a rather different relation to television messages, wouldn't it?).

Children and class

A common element in many of the campaigns against the media has been the elision of class and childhood. Childhood equals dependency, so to represent a people as 'childlike' is to represent them as in need of governance – hence the frequent use of the image in imperial literature. Kipling's "half-devil and half-child" as an epithet for Africans warranted 'our' control over them for their own good – if they became troublesome, it was not political revolt but something more like a tantrum. Of course, we now easily reject this kind of imaging of black people, less aware that it still stalks the imagination in discussions of media influence. It was particularly evident in the campaign against the video nasties, dramatised in the *Daily Mail's* headline: "Rape of our Children's Minds". And class crept in too in the rhetoric of the draft first report of the misnamed Parliamentary Group Video Enquiry (which was only tenuously linked to parliament, with the report of the 'enquiry' written ahead of having the data on which it was supposedly based): "Working class children, especially those from large families, appear most 'at risk' in watching the 'nasties'." Middle-class children (thank heaven) are supposedly better protected by "the greater emphasis on literacy, the arts and conversation in the average middle class family."

Such elements are common across most of the anti-media campaigns. But the linchpin of

all the ideological components is the representation of political aims as if they were moral. While I would argue that this has always been the case, only sometimes does it reach the surface – and then usually because researchers have dug it out. One incident encapsulates the process. During the 70s, a minor but nonetheless highly effective campaign was mounted against a new comic from IPC, *Action*. After a brief seven-month life, the comic was buried under an avalanche of criticism that it was "too violent", a "sevenpenny nightmare", "encouraging delinquency". The company bowed to demands that it be cleaned up and brought it back just two months later, from which point it withered away. What is interesting is that in this case we are able to compare copies of the 'cleaned-up' edition with the publication as originally intended. And a panel-by-panel comparison reveals that the prime change was not in the level of violence, but in the removal of any hint of anti-authority attitudes. Or, as a former art assistant told me: "They told us to take out all the adult political stuff, and turn it back into a boys' adventure comic."

So what kind of politics is being promulgated in the present climate? A good place to start is a reading of Michael Medved's recent book and its reception. Truth to say, the first thing any reviewer should ask is how such a silly book can have made such an impact – it is a book that is influential despite its quality, not because of its strengths. Medved's prime argument is simply bizarre, if we take him literally – for example, his observation that something must be very wrong with Hollywood since in a country where over 80 per cent of the population are church-goers, films rarely show people going happily to church or enjoying being religious. The same criterion is used repeatedly – in relation to religion, the family, businessmen, and so on.

The criterion is bizarre on many grounds. First, do people necessarily want films that mirror the sociological pattern of their own lives? Whatever happened to the realm of fantasy? If art is to be praised or condemned for the accuracy with which it represents reality, then what about ancient Greek drama, in which the gods, kings, unhappy families and revenge are vastly over-represented? But though Medved writes as though this were the nub of his argument, his

real *cause célèbre* is the opposition of "middle American values" and "the popular culture", used endlessly (I counted more than 25 uses) to designate something thoroughly inauthentic but unified, which stands opposed to a genuine, but only now recovering, set of American values: patriotism (signalled by enthusiasm for the Gulf War, for example), domesticity, a defence of the Vietnam escapade (the films about Vietnam are condemned as a "slander" on the Americans who fought).

If we miss this cultural categorisation, we might too easily dismiss Medved's book as a mass of superficial contradictions. For example, on the one hand he argues that Hollywood is so devoted to its anti-American ways and out of kilter with American society that it is producing unpopular films, while on the other he worries endlessly about the films that haven't bombed (we could extend this argument to point out that if falling attendances in American cinemas is proof of Hollywood's anti-Americanism, does the current rise in the British box office mean Hollywood is in touch with British audiences?). Of course, this won't work, because Medved's argument is built on a culture-politics, which is what makes it potentially dangerous. His argument, and the argument of a host of others in America – and somewhat differently in Britain – is that the intelligentsia has failed the masses. The teachers, academics, writers and film-makers have all deserted the cause of the people, so it falls to the right to restate the authentic, natural and spontaneous morality of 'ordinary people'.

There is surely a connection here with the enforced reconstruction of a national curriculum in Britain's schools. And even perhaps with the enforced exclusion of study of the media. The media (in the sense of the imaginative resources through which a society talks to itself) are not to be studied, but stunted. Where they are not stunted, they are to be invaded. I take very seriously the appearance of David Mellor, architect of the Video Recordings Bill, as a Chelsea-loving football commentator on Radio 5, in that it signals a different kind of attempt to co-opt popular culture to a different set of discourses. We are to be spoken to through co-opted media, with a new injunctive paternalism. We haven't cleaned up our lives, so it's to be done for us. Watch their space.

SO WHAT WOULD I DO?

My editor says: "All this history and analysis is fine, but your readers are going to turn round and say, 'yes, but what would you do if a child came home with a pornographic video?' Write me 300 words on that."

I'm interested by the assumption that my personal response will be at odds with my theory. It isn't. So here are some thoughts on where I feel the argument needs to go next.

1. One of the dangers with the moralists' positions is that they are so certain of their own categories. I well remember as a child poring over my elder brother's copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Not only did I find it erotically charged, but I knew my reading of it

was strongly disapproved of. I was learning not just about sex, but about attitudes towards sex. That is not only inevitable, but healthy. And given the example, I am not so confident as the moralists that I have a reliable set of criteria for deciding what is pornographic or not.

2. Ian Brady, the Moors murderer, was questioned closely about his reading habits. He replied that he was most influenced not by de Sade, but by Dostoevsky. There is a caution to be learned from this, namely that *anything* can be read pornographically. And not only that, but the more the state and the moralists insist on defining media materials through cate-

gories of 'sex' and 'violence', and on those bases seek to censor them, the more they will produce pornographic reading skills in the young.

3. Actual parents bringing up actual children do so within histories formed out of real environments, where their children are engaged in all kinds of knowing local cultures. All parents, whether they do so skilfully or not, are constantly taking account of how their children are learning from their world and what is likely to disturb, frighten, confuse, arouse and shape them. Of course, parents, myself included, are constantly involved in acts of control (yes, sometimes censorship) of all kinds of things, from food

through videos to bedtimes. That has not one element in common with state regulation.

4. While moralists worry about the 'vulnerability' of children to the media, I worry about *adults'* vulnerability to follies such as measuring media levels of 'sex' and 'violence'. Simply, there is no such thing as 'sex' or 'violence' in the media – and therefore there cannot be too much or too little or either – there are only *ways of showing and using sexual or violent encounters*, which have wholly different meanings and social implications. The people who need the basic course in media studies (before it is abolished) are those who cannot understand this point.

A new video label from the
Institute of Contemporary Arts
in London:

ICA
PROJECTS

Original and distinctive films
from around the world for
release on video.

LOVE, LUST & IRON



The Hours and Times

In the spring of 1963, before Beatlemania hit Britain, John Lennon and Brian Epstein spent four days together in Barcelona...

In this elegant black & white film, Christopher Münch, the writer, director and cameraman, speculates on the ambiguity of their relationship: a film fraught with homo-erotic tension.

Winner of the Special Jury Prize for Artistic Excellence at the 1992 Sundance Film Festival.

Winner of the Wolfgang Staudte Prize at the 1992 Berlin Film Festival.

"Exquisitely written and performed..."
Newsweek

"Whatever really happened between the men, this poignant, fragmentary film rings true"
Time Out

SRP £10.99

Ju Dou

A masterpiece of the New Chinese Cinema and the first Chinese film ever to be nominated for an Oscar.

Ju Dou is a gripping and erotic drama of lust and revenge set in rural China of the 1920s. Director Zhang Yimou's credits include *Raise The Red Lantern* and *The Story of Qiu Ju*. He was recently the subject of a BBC Arena documentary.



Oscar nominee
for Best Foreign Film 1991.

Winner of the Luis Buñuel Prize,
Cannes Festival 1990.

"Magnificent melodrama..."
Time Out

"Scorching visual intensity...a
superb film"
Daily Telegraph

SRP £12.99



Marquis

A film about corruption, perversion and venality.

Marquis is a surrealist reinterpretation of the life of the Marquis de Sade. The film, directed by Henri Xhonneux, is a satiric fantasy set in the Bastille immediately prior to the French Revolution. This bizarre menagerie - all the actors and actresses play their roles in animal masks - centres around the prisoner de Sade, portrayed as a rheumy-eyed old dog who engages in animated dialogue with Colin, his own massive penis which has a face, name and mind of its own.

"Perversely bawdy"
Premiere

"Witty, thoroughly obscene and
rather endearing"
Time Out

SRP £12.99

Tetsuo: The Iron Man

A cyberpunk nightmare.

From Japan, a cult classic in the making - the precursor to Tetsuo II: Bodyhammer.

A wild delirium of violent flashbacks, fast-forwards and nightmarish dream sequences, Tetsuo, directed by Shinya Tsukamoto, uses elements from monster movies, TV science-fiction, manga comic strips and hardcore rock. His films have inspired comparison with the work of Lynch and Cronenberg but Tetsuo: The Iron Man goes further....a post-modern "bodyhorror", a flesh and metal mutation....a metallic monster!

"A bizarre wet dream,
a horrifying sex death...
And ghastly special effects...
Unmissable!"
City Limits

SRP £10.99



ICA
PROJECTS

Marketed and Distributed by Manga Entertainment Ltd.

ICA PROJECTS VIDEOS AVAILABLE FROM: OUR PRICE VIDEO, HMV, WH SMITH, VIRGIN, JOHN MENZIES & ALL GOOD VIDEO SHOPS



The 60s may haunt us – but exactly what did happen when pop music and Swinging London took to celluloid in films from 'A Hard Day's Night' to 'Performance'? By Jon Savage

SNAPSHOTS OF THE SIXTIES

● In the 1960 film *Village of the Damned*, a small village is knocked out for several hours by an invisible, localised and highly potent force. Within a few months, 12 children are born (many to unmarried mothers). The children develop alarming characteristics: telepathy, a group mind and a group appearance, a certain glassy abstraction.

These children are aliens: they do not think like us, they do not want what we want, they are everywhere. The film's tension comes from the adults' reaction: should the children be penalised or understood? Like all paranoid science-fiction films of the time, *Village of the Damned* is more about contemporary fears than fictional universes: the inevitable destruction of the children shows us an essentially pre-war, hierarchical society fearful of its children, fearful of the group, fearful of the future.

It's April 1964 and the aliens are here. To pro-

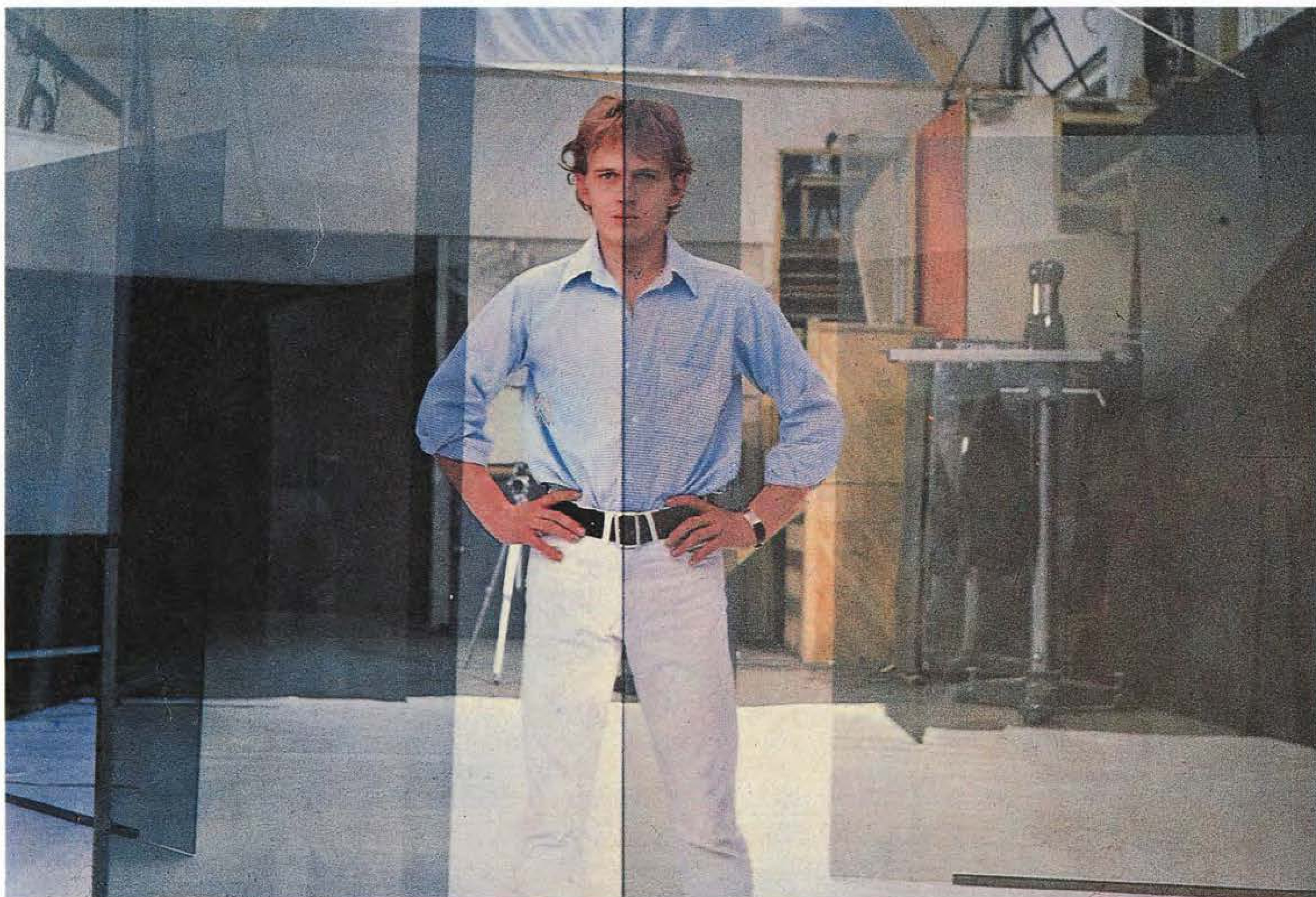
mote their first feature film, *A Hard Day's Night*, the Beatles – all of whom are over 21 – are placed in prams, two by two. To the uninitiated, they are difficult to tell apart, with their identical clothes and long hair. That same week, the group has five records in the US top ten. The film for which this clip is shot will be premiered in three months time, July 1964: during its first week's release in the US, it will take more than six times its budget. Suddenly time has sped up, as it will throughout the rest of the decade. Britain is living in the present.

It's obvious – to the point of cliché – that something happened between the years 1960 and 1964: the jump-cut into present and future time that those four years represented was so jarring that it is still a matter of furious debate. Much of this debate is carried on at a very low level: spectacular recantations from former 60s libertines, the yelping envy of today's cultural

conservatives, whose house god, Philip Larkin, wrote: "Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three/ (which was rather late for me) – / Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban/ and the Beatles' first LP."

The 60s have long been a target for conservatives and Little Englanders. For the last ten years, Tory cabinet ministers such as Norman Tebbit and Nicholas Ridley – indeed the former Prime Minister herself, Mrs Thatcher – have explicitly attacked the 60s as the decade when everything went wrong in British life: when the verities were swamped by a rising tide of drugs, permissiveness and socialism, when traditional family values were under attack. John Major too has recently taken up this theme.

This hostility to the 60s has become a kind of pathology – which is interesting. What happened during those years, between 1960 and 1969, that is so disturbing to so many people



After the Beatles' first LP:
John Boorman's 'Catch Us
If You Can', opposite;
Antonioni's 'Blow-Up',
above; and Richard Lester's
'A Hard Day's Night', left

BFI STILL: POSTERS AND DESIGNS

today? We think we know about the 60s, but as the current exhibition 'The Sixties Art Scene in London' at the Barbican and its accompanying film season *Blow-Up* make clear, we don't. A decade seen today either as the time when the fabric of society began to unravel or as a pop golden age reveals itself as something far more complex and disturbing.

My own experience of the 60s was as a teenager in west London. My environment was saturated in pop, to the extent that it was the only thing through which I could make sense of my world: the blank, mobile suburbia of Ealing. In fact, as I now realise, that suburbia was one of the main breeding grounds for the British pop music that went global during the decade: the clubs of Richmond, Ealing and Twickenham threw up the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Who. In 1966, my favourite record was *Substitute*; although I didn't know it,

Pete Townshend then lived half a mile away, just off my daily journey to school.

Ealing even had its own Pop Art exploitation group, the Eyes. Their first record, *When the Night Falls*, came complete with auto-destructive feedback. Their second, *The Immediate Pleasure*, was heralded by larger than life-size advertisements on the platform of Ealing Broadway tube station. "The Eyes Are Smashed to Fragments," ran the copy, and to promote the idea, the five Eyes posed in rugby shirts emblazoned with a huge, unblinking eye – in the centre of which was a photograph of the Eye concerned.

The eye of the media was everywhere then, for the first time. "The period was already framed by the TV screen and, to a lesser extent, the cinema screen," writes David Mellor in the catalogue to the Barbican exhibition. "Whether it was possible to gain access to an actual world beyond this media 'spectacle', an access to the

life-world and the ground of existence, concerned several artists. At times the metaphoric media frame became a real one." Our dominant image of the decade, Swinging London, is in fact a journalistic conceit coined after the event, in April 1966, by *Time's* Piri Halasz.

In the crossover between the 50s and the 60s, artists like Richard Smith and Robyn Denny were exploring the links between fine art and advertising. In 1963 the Beatles were photographed in front of Denny's *Austin Reed* mural: the first image you see as you enter the Barbican show. Everything was coming together: new technology resulted in the spread of media such as television (BBC2 in 1964, the first addition since ITV in 1955), pop music and advertising – all still comparatively new to Britain.

In 1957 critic Laurence Alloway talked about film scenographies that used "the saturation ►

◀ of an environment with communication devices." The London films of the mid-60s take this for granted: nothing is pure, everything is mediated, even the idea of youth itself. "That's why you chose her, wasn't it?" says an advertising man to his boss in John Boorman's first feature, *Catch Us If You Can* (1965). "That's her image: rootless, classless, kooky, product of affluence, typical of modern youth."

In *A Hard Day's Night*, as you might expect from Richard Lester, a director with experience in advertising and television, the Beatles are shown to be the victims of a relentless media onslaught: during the blindingly cut press conference scene, George Harrison is photographed and you see flash flash flash flash the still image of the photograph come up on screen. Elsewhere, Harrison is kidnapped by a cynical youth programmer: "Now you'll like these," says Simon, shoving a collection of shirts under his nose. "You'll really 'dig' them. They're 'fab' and all those pimply hyperboles." "They're dead grotty," Harrison replies, instantly creating slang.

The main location is a television studio and at least three numbers are shot from the multiple viewpoint of studio cameras, often in shot, then compounded with a shot of several studio monitors at once. We are always aware that this is mediated. The effect is to make everything more intense, capturing the real insanity the Beatles were then suffering (much of the budget was spent on avoiding fans).

In fact, it becomes clear that the media distort time: expanding it, fragmenting it, until the distinction between mediated and actual

With a little help from their friends: James Fox, undercover, in 'Performance', right; Mick Jagger, dressed to kill, opposite



ceases to exist. Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* – shot in summer 1966 – takes as its hero a fashionable documentary photographer, a mixture of the real-life Donald McCullin and David Bailey. Much of the film is taken up with the photographic process – from shooting to developing to cropping and framing to selling the end result in the mass media.

The plot is a metaphor for media voyeurism: David Hemmings photographs two lovers on one of many whims, realises later, when the photographs are blown up, that a murder has been committed, and goes back to find the body. At first cynical, he is profoundly shocked and becomes passionate – a no-no in this and today's media world. When both the body and the evidence of his photographs are removed, he is left wondering "Was this real?", but in media, the imaginary becomes real.

The London of these films is almost unrecog-

nisable from today's stasis: a city in transition, with its history becoming subsumed in a new cybernetic space, all speed and arrows as in Robert Freeman's 1961 photograph of Park Lane (then being redeveloped into a three-lane mini-motorway). The images of London that you take away from these films are of the demolition of St Luke's Church, Notting Hill and the construction of new houses in Ealing (*A Hard Day's Night*), of advertising hoardings cloaking bomb-sites, of underpasses and arrowed traffic signs (*Catch Us If You Can*), of new modernist wastes like London Wall (*Blow-Up*).

A burnt-out London

If this is exciting, it is also temporary. Despite their official status as products of youth culture's golden moment, both *A Hard Day's Night* and *Catch Us If You Can* have as their dominant theme a brief escape inevitably curtailed. In the Beatles' film, the infamous *Can't Buy Me Love* sequence – where the group lets rip on a Gatwick helicopter pad: more speed – is a rare exterior sequence in a film dominated by interior locations. In *Catch Us If You Can*, Dave Clark and Barbara Ferris take off on a whim, to be hunted down relentlessly until the final Felliniesque shot of a crowd of cameramen and journalists, caught where sea and sky meet in nothingness.

However crudely, both films make a connection between the sudden enfranchisement of youth – which may well be temporary – and the sudden shift in political power from Conservative to Labour in 1964. In *A Hard Day's Night*, the Beatles' group identity is seen to embody a gut

northern socialism. (As Christopher Logue wrote then: "I vote Labour... because Ringo does.") Hard though it may be to imagine today, after nearly 14 Conservative years, a change in government from right to left always stimulates the arts. But this is a fragile freedom. In *Catch Us If You Can*, an ad man says, "We've flogged energy until it's tired," before advocating a return to the idea of "gracious living", while Simon admonishes a truculent George Harrison: "The new thing is to care passionately, and be right wing."

Both films show the insecurity of a new phenomenon (in 1964 and early 1965, British pop culture was still a new idea). By the time *Blow-Up* was shot, a year and a half later, the Beatles had their MBEs, London was established as a youth city and people had started taking marijuana instead of amphetamines. Antonioni could go further and deeper. He amplifies the

point made by the two earlier films, that rapid change creates ellipses in communication. In *A Hard Day's Night* and *Catch Us If You Can*, people talk at and across each other all the way through, but they are sure of who they are, they are in the same time. This parallels both films' forward motion.

In *Blow-Up*, the process is slowed down. The certainties of black and white shift into a washed-out colour. Hemmings' confrontation with Sarah Miles, where she is expecting him to tell her he loves her, is revealed in silences and awkward pauses, followed by spurts of intensity. This is the rhythm of the film itself. In the climactic sequence, Hemmings goes to tell his agent about his discovery. He finds him at a smart party, a fabulous *mise en scène* in a panellied house overlooking the Thames. His agent, Ron, is stoned out of his mind, but pot doesn't alter reality, it intensifies it: Ron's inability to understand Hemmings' needs is not created by but is revealed by the drug. The chasm that has always been there between them opens up.

In similar fashion, the pop music used to express exuberance throughout the two earlier films is now seen as an agent of alienation. *Blow-Up* is not a musical film – the Herbie Hancock soundtrack is lousy – and its fame as such rests on another climactic sequence, this time featuring the Yardbirds (with twin lead guitarists Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page). If the Beatles play in an ornate theatre (the old Scala) to screaming teenagers who end up dominating the soundtrack, the Yardbirds play in a scruffy club, to a catatonic and silent, if trendy audience of student age.

Only two people are dancing – a black man and a teenage Janet Street-Porter lookalike as Hemmings scours the club for Vanessa Redgrave. The group's equipment starts to malfunction, and the moodier guitarist – Jeff Beck, not required to act – starts to attack the amplification system. Antonioni had wanted The Who – whose Pete Townshend would smash his guitar in a fit of auto-destruction (he had studied at Ealing Art College when Gustav Metzger was lecturing there) – but they were not available. So he persuaded the Yardbirds, not then known for such antics, to do the same.

When Beck throws the remains of his trashed guitar into the audience, they go mad, instantly. Hemmings struggles furiously to secure the neck and rushes out of the club; once on Oxford Street, he looks at the thing and suddenly discards it. What was desired one moment is now useless. Objects are being discarded willy-nilly through all these films (the autographed postcards in *A Hard Day's Night*, half-eaten food in *Catch Us If You Can*) – obvious enough in a period of overproduction, but Antonioni's heavy-handed comment on the fickleness of pop fame has a resonance.

Films take a long time in production, too long sometimes to come out at the right time to coincide with pop's fast-changing moods. If *A Hard Day's Night* succeeded because of its four-month turnaround from the start of shooting to the premiere, the many months needed for Antonioni to finish *Blow-Up* – from summer 1966 to spring 1967 – made his film out of time on its release. For one, the Yardbirds had



stopped having hits and the Beatles had withdrawn from public performances, amid rumours that they had split up. For another, the whole fantasy of Swinging London had foundered in the first halt to the post-war boom: a wage freeze followed by the devaluation of the pound in 1967.

Its casual sexism aside, though, *Blow-Up* remains timeless as an examination of the warping effect that media can have on their participants. If *A Hard Day's Night* and *Catch Us If You Can* reveal their stars to be fundamentally unchanged by what has gone on during the 90 minutes or so we have spent watching them, we are left in no doubt at the end of both *Blow-Up* and the last, and perhaps greatest of this quartet of London films, *Performance*, that something shattering has happened to the protagonists. In these last, pop/media culture is seen not as something transient, but as fundamentally transforming, both wonderful and malign.

With *Performance*, shot in summer 1968 but not released until 1970, we could be in any time until the late 70s. As the young girl comments, staring at a late 60s poster of Jagger/Turner: "You should have seen him ten years ago." Jagger's burnt-out rock star, Turner, predates the better-known cinematic variant, David Essex in *Stardust* (1974), by a good six years. If time starts to slip in *Blow-Up*, then *Performance* blasts it into an everlasting present.

If there is an auteur of the film, it is generally regarded – after his subsequent success – as Nicolas Roeg. But in fact it is Donald Cammell's

film: he wrote the script, co-directed and spent months in an edit, as he told me in 1984, which became ever more abstracted, ever more intellectual. With his *haut/demi-monde* experience as a fine artist, Cammell was well suited to show the underside of the 60s explosion: his script casts James Fox as an abstraction of the Krays, who had become criminal stars in Swinging London (and in the Barbican show), while his pop star Turner takes on the precious, full-tilt persona more accurately associated with the Rolling Stone who would die between the film's completion and its release, Brian Jones.

'Come on in my kitchen'

Performance dazzles on several levels. If Lester in *A Hard Day's Night* used hand-held cameras and cut to the beat to emphasise the excitement of the moment, and Antonioni used a wide-angle lens to communicate dislocation, Roeg and Cammell let loose a whole box of effects, such as the many mirrors that run through the film. Fish-eye lenses, coloured stock, gauze over the lens produce images that are cut across or with the many rhythms that make up the brilliant score.

Former Phil Spector arranger Jack Nitzsche uses early synthesisers to conjure up psychoactive drones and pulses – some, but not all of which are on the released soundtrack. These are matched subliminally by cuts which often cross time and, at first, logic. A QC pontificates to a jury about market forces: as he speaks, a drone intensifies and the jury become the spectators of flagellation movies in a seedy Soho cin-

ema. Chas (James Fox) is in a meeting with his boss, Harry Flowers: as Flowers pontificates, the music distorts and changes phase. Chas appears shot through a blue filter with Flowers' words echoing as if from very far away.

Performance dramatises stress, even breakdown, and shows us how good can come from a state that most of us find terrifying. It does so by going right into that state. Here, everything is seen either in instantaneous, hallucinatory close-up – as where Chas, stuck in Wandsworth and talking to his boss, realises his days are numbered: his doodle of a man disappears under a hail of black ink from his pen (this within a few seconds) – or in the most profound of blurs. "I wonder," says Turner, "If you were me, what would you do?" "I don't know," Chas replies. "It depends, it depends on who you are." "Who am I? Do you know who you are?" "Yes."

What's great about *Performance* is the way it takes up every challenge thrown down by 60s pop ebullience. The modernist environment under construction in the mid-decade is shown here, in Chas' flat, to be heartless, soulless, a mask for violence (fast forward to *A Clockwork Orange*). The conversational ellipses of a time when things are happening so fast that everyone talks at each other are turned into a lightning-fast, logic-crunching, deadly duel. (Just look at the three-hander in the kitchen between Fox, Jagger and Anita Pallenberg: I'm not transcribing it.)

The soundtrack flashes forwards and backwards, going into the past and future of the ►

◀ R&B so charmingly plundered by the Mod groups. Jagger does a passable version of Robert Johnson's devilish invocation, 'Come On In My Kitchen', while for the first time in these films black voices are heard – Merry Clayton (later to find fame as the voice behind the Stones' *Gimme Shelter*) and the Last Poets, whose influence on 80s rap would be considerable. Indeed, the film parallels only *A Hard Day's Night* in the way it has fed back into popular culture.

Intensive lives

Most acutely, *Performance* goes straight for the promise of transformation held out by 60s pop – and pop ever after, for that matter. The androgyny that is played up so much in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Catch Us If You Can* (although not without a certain resistance from the determinedly blokeish Dave Clark Five in the latter), is taken to its logical conclusion. In the climactic mushroom sequence, Chas is transformed from a gun-packing psycho into a bewigged, drugged, feminised man. In the morning he wakes up next to someone who appears to be Turner: he starts to make love, and the figure changes to Lucy, the more androgynous of the two women in Turner's household.

For the first time, he offers to do something for someone else – to fetch Lucy some shampoo – and it is while on this errand that he meets his erstwhile colleagues, now executioners. He has changed, but they haven't, and they stand appalled in the seedy glamour of the Powis Square location.

And now, Cammell goes as far as he possibly can. We have already seen Turner and Chas blending – quick facial superimpositions – and now they bond, irrevocably, with Turner's murder by Chas. As Chas himself goes to his death, driving through sunny Richmond Park in a white Rolls Royce, he looks out of the car window, but the person staring out is not Chas but Turner. The blending is complete, an ending that is satisfying and curiously hopeful.

If it is hard today to imagine anyone backing a film as intense as *Performance*, that may tell us something about the cynicism of the 90s and remind us of one of the vital strengths of the earlier decade. These films dramatise Paul Virilio's challenge in *Pure War*: "Can't we envision, isn't it incumbent upon us to imagine what an intensive life could be? Being alive means to be lively, to be quick. There is a struggle between metabolic speed, the speed of the living, and technological speed, the speed of death which already exists in cars, telephones, the media."

The tension in these 60s films lies in this struggle for time, for life: their life mocks the cynicism of today's culture. In seeking to deny and denigrate the 60s, the New Right merely reinforces that decade's mythic power. That power remains strong for a very good reason: a cool look at that time, 30 years on, reveals a Britain where people were not afraid to confront the present, were not afraid to think about how the future might be. This optimism, the will to survive even, is still a beacon.

'The Sixties Art Scene in London' is at the Barbican, London until 11 June; the Barbican film season 'Blow-Up' runs until 13 May; the 60s film season at the Cornerhouse, Manchester runs from 5-30 May

PAUL JONES ON 'PRIVILEGE'

I don't suppose the editor will mind if I start by saying that he asked me for this piece – there was no burning desire on my part to write it. Nor do I have anything like total recall. (I was going to say that I don't have a very good memory of the film, but that could be taken to mean something else.)

The first time I became aware of the 1967 film 'Privilege' was when I read (in the 'NME', I believe) that Eric Burdon, lead singer of the Animals, was to star in a film about a pop singer directed by Peter Watkins. I was already aware of Watkins' reputation from 'The War Game' (which I hadn't seen, the BBC having commissioned it and then declined to show it) and 'Culloden' (which – I think – I had). When my phone rang and a voice asked if I would be interested in being in the film, my first reaction was that if I was to go into movies it ought to be as a leading actor, not in a supporting role in an Eric Burdon film. (I blush to report that thought today, but there you are – or rather, there I was.) Anyway, I was excited to discover that they meant the lead. I never did find out what had happened to Eric: when I asked Peter Watkins about it months later, he replied something to the effect of Eric not having the 5 per cent extra that was needed. I reckoned that 5 per cent was probably the bit between 5ft 7in and 6ft, once they'd cast, in Jean Shrimpton, a leading lady who was 5ft 10in.

I went to meet Peter in an office somewhere in the West End. There were photographs pinned all over the walls, most of them stills from Leni Riefenstahl's 'Triumph of the Will'. I don't remember if there were also some from Elia Kazan's 'A Face in the Crowd', which was another film I remember discussing at the time. (The stadium sequence in 'Privilege' sought to evoke 'Triumph of the Will', of course.)

It might seem likely that a singer in the process of leaving the group Manfred Mann to start a solo career would already be planning a move into films. But I had no desire to be an actor (I'd been pressurised into my only previous role, Duncan in the school 'Macbeth') and anyway, I thought of movies as the work of the director rather than the cast. So I was ready to do as I was told, within reason, by a man who was highly regarded in a profession where I was an absolute beginner. In a newspaper interview I was asked how I went about a task for which I was so untrained; I replied that Peter Watkins showed me what he wanted for each scene before we shot it, and I merely mimicked him. This upset Peter, I think because of the implication (unintended) that he was dictatorial; and in any case, he said, he was already mimicking me when he went through the scenes, so my performance was my imitation of his imitation of me. At first I would learn the next day's scenes the night before, but I increasingly found that Peter would have been up half the night working over the script, so I sometimes scarcely recognised the scene I'd memorised. Soon I would learn just the shape of the scene the night before, and then the precise lines on arriving at the location.

I have fond memories of many of the cast, including Michael Barrington, with whom I afterwards – and most enjoyably – worked in the play 'Conduct Unbecoming'; the sardonic Jeremy Child; Max Bacon, with his fund of anecdotes and reminiscences of Bert



Wide of the mark: Paul Jones in 'Privilege'

Ambrose and his orchestra; and Mark London, whose ad-libs were so good and so in character, and so often somehow left on the cutting-room floor. There was an end-of-shoot party. Towards the end of it, my then wife and I found ourselves sitting with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, Ringo Starr, Frankie Howerd and Françoise Dorléac. Taylor and Burton invited us all back to their place, as the party seemed to be winding down. I think I honestly felt that I had no business in such starry company; at any rate we didn't go. The missed opportunity is one of my few small regrets.

I recall odd moments and places from the promotion schedule, usually prompted by photographs – none of which I can lay my hands on at the time of writing. I was snapped in Zurich (at my own request) looking up at the plaque commemorating the birth of Dadaism at the Cabaret Voltaire. The local man knew how to run things: we went to the cinema where the film was receiving its gala screening, acknowledged the applause of the audience as we took our seats, left as soon as the lights went down and had dinner at a wonderful restaurant, and returned just in time for the end credits.

Another photograph, taken at a film festival which may have been Cannes, shows Watkins and me, helpless with ill-concealed laughter, on a red-carpeted marble staircase. If my memory serves, what we found so funny was that it strongly reminded us of the scene in the film where Steve Shorter is at last courageous enough to 'blow the whistle' on the dangerous nonsense which has been constructed around him and has built up into the totalitarian nightmare about which the film is a warning.

Political historians will be more able than I to comment on the combination of church, state and pop icon which already seemed a worrying prospect in the laissez-faire 60s. But notwithstanding the capitulation to Hitler of some parts of the German church, 'Privilege' does seem wide of the mark as a piece of prediction. For a start, there can be few bodies nowadays of whom the government takes less notice than of the church. (Indeed, the Opposition has recently stolen a march on them in this area.)

At a press conference shortly after 'Privilege' was released, a journalist asked me where I stood vis-à-vis the scathing view it took of the church. On hearing that I was an atheist, he asked if that wasn't a rather bleak and comfortless position. On the contrary, I told him; I found it more reassuring than a lot of the alternatives. In a way, I still think I was right: guaranteed extinction would be a soft option. It's one in which I can no longer put any faith.

BROADWAY PRESENTS



shots in the dark

**NOTTINGHAM'S
INTERNATIONAL
MYSTERY FESTIVAL**

10 - 20 JUNE 1993

A ten day extravaganza of movies
with a mysterious edge.

Highlights include....

- Premieres and previews of new Hollywood thrillers, including *The Assassin* with Bridget Fonda.
- Special guest American novelist Sara Paretsky.
- Classic archive film seasons of Femmes Fatales and Comic Crime.
- Weegee the famous, photography exhibition.
- Shots on the Page, - British crime writing convention.
- An evening of silent film with live musical accompaniment.
- Harvey Keitel retrospective
- An exciting education programme of talks, discussions and workshops.
- Crime in the City competition for young people.

Get more details from:
Shots in the Dark,
Broadway,
14 Broad St,
Nottingham, NG1 3AL,
Tel (0602) 526600



Brighton film & television festival MAY 93

British Repertory Season
Ian Christie on Powell and Pressburger
Walter Donohue on Orlando

John Wyver on Virtual TV
Industrial Light and Magic

Harmonie Band play Sherlock Jr
London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Tour
Isaac Julien in conversation with Felix de Rooy

Paul Watson & Molly Dineen on Documentary
Emily's Ghost by The Children's Film Unit
The People's Choice Film Poll

Programme information: Duke of York's cinema, Preston Circus,
Brighton BN1 4AA. Tel: 0273 602503
Advance Booking: Dome Box Office: 0273 674357

Widescreen Cinema

JOHN BELTON

Beginning with film's progress from peepshow to projection in 1896, and focusing on crucial stages in film history such as the advent of sound, Belton puts widescreen cinema in its proper cultural context. Leading us through the twists and turns and decades it took to change the shape of film, we are shown how its fitful process reflects the vagaries of cultural history. 1992 34 b/w photos. 288 pages 0-674-95261-8 £15.25

Child of Paradise

Marcel Carné and the Golden Age of French Cinema

EDWARD BARON TURK

"The most welcome new film book of the past six months...This excellent critical biography puts Carné in his social and historical context and completes his rehabilitation." —Philip French, *The Observer* (1989)

"This handsomely produced book, with its detailed filmography, good illustrations and thorough documentation, is essential reading for anyone interested in the great period of French Cinema." —*Film Review Annual*

Now Available in Paperback! 117 b/w photos. 512 pages 0-674-11461-2 £15.95

From May Fourth to June Fourth

Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China

EDITED BY ELLEN WIDMER

AND DAVID DER-WEI WANG

1993 0-674-32502-8

paperback £19.95



NEW FROM HARVARD

All books available from quality bookshops.
For further inquiries contact Harvard University Press:
14 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2LP

Jiri Menzel, acclaimed director of 'Closely Observed Trains' and head of the Prague film school, reflects on his career, the break-up of his country, and Czech cinema. By Robert Carver

END OF THE LINE

● Downtown Prague on a sunny afternoon. Across the square, past the Gothic church, trams rattle through the cobbled streets. The *fin-de-siècle* buildings are shabby and peeling, unpainted since before the Second World War. Only the advertising hoarding tells you this is not Harry Lime's Vienna.

Inside an anonymous office block, a slight, elegant grey-haired man in a poloneck sweater and gold-framed glasses stirs sugar into his espresso and examines me quizzically. A microphone stands between us as sentinel; the cassette tape rolls on as witness.

This is Jiri Menzel, whose classic film of Second World War love and betrayal, *Closely Observed Trains*, won an Oscar in 1967. With his near contemporary Milos Forman, Menzel remains the symbol of the Czech film renaissance of the 60s. Forman went on to the US and international acclaim; Menzel stayed in Prague and continued, in spite of political problems, to make films which gained a critical and popular following throughout eastern Europe, but which with the possible exception of *Larks on a String* (1969, not released until 1990) failed to have the same impact in the west. The suppression of the Prague Spring crushed the Czech New Wave, and Menzel suffered along with everyone else. He did not fall silent – rather he learned to speak in another dialect, unfamiliar to us in the west.

Robert Carver: *The communists may have gone, but the new freedoms have brought new problems for the Czech film industry. How do you feel about the partition of your country, and what do you think it will mean for the film industry?*

Jiri Menzel: I am very unhappy about this split. I have always felt Czechoslovakian, not Czech, and have always had the best of relations with Slovaks, who are my countrymen. This rush to divorce which has been foisted on us by ambitious and unscrupulous politicians has very little public support. As for the film industry, I hope it won't have any effect. I always enjoy working in the Slovakian capital Bratislava – they have very good studios. I don't think

artists will take any notice of this folly. We will continue to work together. If anything, I prefer Slovakian films to Czech films and I work with Slovakian actors as often as I can. As a reaction to this political stupidity, it seems Czech artistic products are more popular than ever in Slovakia – and vice versa.

You are currently head of FAMU, the film school here in Prague, as well as still being an active movie and theatre director. You went through FAMU too, as a student, didn't you?

I started in 1957 and finished in 1961.

Was Milos Forman there at the same time?

He left the year I arrived – he's a bit older.

What was the tradition at FAMU when you were there – was it experimental?

It was highly rigorous and conventional. There were very good teachers, analysts of German cinema, American cinema. Milan Kundera taught comparative literature. FAMU was good because it employed the best film-makers in the country as part-time teachers, as well as other very good teachers full time. Emir Kusturica, Agnieszka Holland and many other non-Czech directors are FAMU graduates. The school formed the basis of the modern Czech film industry and everyone except the immediate post-war directors passed through it.

After graduating did you go straight into feature-film production?

I worked for a short time in film news, then did two years compulsory military service. As soon as I'd done that I started my first feature film, *Closely Observed Trains*.

Milos Forman chose to become an emigre. Why did you stay after the huge success of 'Closely Observed Trains' and what problems did it pose for you?

I was offered work in the US as soon as *Closely Observed Trains* won the Oscar. But at the time I was set to make a Czech movie called *Larks on a String*. When the Russian tanks rolled in it was still possible for me to shoot the movie, but once it was finished it was forbidden a showing and the border was closed to me. Like all my generation – not just film-makers, but writers and artists too – I was without work for several

years. It was the period called normalisation. In the end, I'm glad I stayed and didn't go into exile – I don't think I could be a successful international director. Milos Forman did well because he knows how to make movies for the whole world – and he does it very well. But I'm not sure I could do it. I prefer to work for a Czech audience.

When you made 'Closely Observed Trains' there was political censorship but relative artistic freedom, with a high level of state subsidy. Today there is no censorship, but the tyranny of market forces instead. The mid-60s was a very happy time, the flowering of hope and optimism before all the repression and disappointment. Television wasn't so important and there was no competition with foreign movies, no video, no satellites. It was ideal in economic terms too because no single producer was responsible for financing a film. It was a production machine, just like a sausage factory or car plant or shoes. But it was run without regard for real productivity, which is why our country became poorer and poorer.

We made about 50 movies a year, though few of them were any good. The lack of financial responsibility on the part of the producer meant young directors got a chance – in my own case, no one asked me, "What have you done at film school?" Instead, my colleague just asked a producer, saying, "Oh, Mr Menzel can direct too, why not let him make a film?" It was as simple as that – I got the money and got to make a film. A golden age, you might say, and gone for ever. We had a certain liberty, but within limits, unlike today when everything is possible but nobody knows what to do. In those days we knew the enemy.

Do you think film thrives under repressive regimes, because directors have to become artful and oblique to get their message past the censors?

Exactly. The strength of a film-maker lies in his inner morality, in knowing what is right and wrong and portraying it. The first thing you must know is why you are making the film. Then you must know your limits.

The communist world has lived with an enemy for a long time. First the Nazis, then capitalism, then Stalinism. Can you live without a scapegoat?

We still have an enemy – it's ourselves. We still have to fight against madness and for sanity. It's our duty. Since the 70s the best movie-makers in the west – French and German directors in particular – have become increasingly egotistical, individualist and arrogant. They no longer make movies for the people, but for their own personal artistic expression. I'm strongly against this trend. With television completely amoral, the Church ignored – who has the biggest influence on people's souls, on young people? The film-makers. It's our responsibility. It's necessary for us to remain, if not moralists, then at least ethical guides.

In Prague at the moment there seems to be only one Czech movie playing – all the rest are American or western imports of the sort which couldn't be shown here under communism. Is this just a holiday from socialism, or is it the end of the Czech film industry? I hope it's just a holiday, but people do pick up bad habits. I remember my first visit abroad, when I was about 30, to Paris. My idea of Paris was a glowing beacon of culture, but what I saw



Love and war: Menzel's comic hero in 'Closely Observed Trains'

in the cinemas there shocked me. Horror movies, cheap trash – such stupidities as could never have been shown here. This was the late 60s, and it got worse and worse. Here, thanks to our censorship, we were never exposed to such trash. Of course, some good movies were banned, but at least we escaped all that torrent of rubbish, which meant that Czech viewers were very cultivated – a paradoxical result of censorship. Now it's over. The critics in the west are very gullible, they are willing to spend hours talking earnestly about populist garbage with zero content. It's a sign of how easily bad taste can spread, and now it's here too.

Which western film-makers do you approve of?

I like François Truffaut's work – the opposite of Jean-Luc Godard. Currently there's no one whose work I can honestly say I admire. Truffaut thought of his viewers.

Can we talk now about the shooting of 'Closely Observed Trains'?

It was a very special time. People were paid by the week in those days, not by results. We had plenty of time for shooting – about 12 weeks I think – the opposite of today. Black-and-white film stock was very cheap so I could shoot using a 9 or 10:1 ratio, whereas today it would be only 5:1. The conditions were so different. They seem like a dream today.

'Closely Observed Trains' was your first feature. Which films had you seen at that point that you think might have influenced you – the Italian neo-realists?

I had seen very few Italian movies – De Sica, yes, and one Rossellini, *Roma, Città Aperta*. In America they said they saw the influence of John Ford, but I'd only seen one Ford movie I liked – *Stagecoach*. At film school I'd had the opportunity to see good films, but not very many – a few movies by Renoir, René Clair, Chaplin. What all the movies I liked had in common was that they were interested in humanity.

Can I suggest that you were also influenced by the playful, ironic, Czech-Bohemian literary tradition – the tradition of 'The Good Soldier Schweik'?

Not Schweik, but certainly other Czech literature – Karel Čapek, Jan Nerud. I also drew inspi-

ration from Czech satirical theatre, which was very strong then.

What is the future for the Czech film industry today?

One thing we have here which is very valuable is a tradition. Film production began here at the turn of the century and has carried on in an unbroken line, with the skills passed on. When I compare them with what I've seen in Germany and France, Russia and Hungary, our technicians and crafts people have great strengths. So the loss of subsidies will do a lot of damage. If the Czech film industry collapses due to market forces, our future will be co-productions, with scripts and money from abroad. It will probably be good for our technicians, but not so good for Czech films.

You are now head of FAMU. Could a young graduate of yours go out today and make a new 'Closely Observed Trains'?

No. Those conditions will never come back. It might be possible to work with television, to find a foreign co-production, perhaps.

But co-productions so often mean a foreign script with foreigners calling the shots – your technicians simply making a Europudding.

That's right – and the result is a bastard. There's another type of co-production, though – to make a Czech movie with foreign money and use two or three foreign artists, but it's very difficult to find well-known actors who can act with a Czech soul.

Is Milos Forman's 'Amadeus', shot in Prague, a Czech film or a foreign film to you?

I admire Milos. In spite of American money and actors he made a film for all the world, but he put in a Czech spirit, as he did in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

You've recently made a film adapted from a play by Vaclav Havel based on John Gay's 'The Beggar's Opera'. Did you work closely with Havel on that?

Mr Havel was very occupied with affairs of state, so I only talked to him once or twice before the shooting. And without his help I didn't feel justified in changing very much.

How do you rate Havel as a playwright?

He and I are, you could say, very different cups

of tea. The film wasn't my idea, it was proposed to me just after the revolution. I found Havel's characters models, vehicles for ideas, and that made it difficult for me as I need to work with three-dimensional characters. His people are like crystal, architecture – artificial constructions, but not really life, no heart.

What would you say your credo is as a film-maker?

Are you a socialist? A humanist?

Socialist is not a very good word these days, it's been much misused. I think any human being has to be respected, but on condition that the human being merits respect. I am not like Vaclav – I have no sympathy for prisoners. Thanks to the crime tradition, the noir tradition, we see this world simply as sport, car chases, killings, and no one has any interest in the victims.

Your later films have been huge popular successes in eastern Europe but not in the west.

It's another world – after 40 years of complete separation, we're 20 years behind you.

Is there also something in the culture of eastern Europe – nothing to do with communism, but the Slavic tradition, the Magyar, which is more collectivist, less individualistic?

Yes, but it's also simply a question of us being behind. We are a younger nation than you westerners, our grandfathers were peasants. We are closer, human being to human being, than you. We have always been under foreign domination, since the Austrians in the sixteenth century. After 1918 we became free, and the influences came in, not just from Vienna but from Paris and Berlin and the US. Our architecture, literature, theatre all flourished, and they had one thing in common – humanism. That is what surprised me about France – an intellectual elite who are highly cultivated with the rest of the population without culture. Here, there's more of a balance, a fairly high general level of culture in everyone. Good films, good poetry have always been widely appreciated by ordinary working people. Poetry is often published in runs of 100,000.

But once ordinary people get hold of consumer goods, they give up art and culture, don't they? That's happening here now, in Prague.

I'm afraid it is happening here. We have some advantages – there has always been a feeling here that one has to be cultured, which has gone in the west. Over there, it's merely a fashion accessory – sport, pop, American movies have driven out culture. Here, in our tradition, it's a little bit better, but as the years go by we can lose it.

What about your own film plans for the future?

I have two new movies planned – one with David Puttnam, who wants me to do a Czech film in English here, and another an American co-production. We are talking. In the old days we made films, now we talk, talk, talk. But still – we go on.

The day after this interview, in the English-language newspaper 'The Prague Post', a report was published of a student revolt at FAMU. An unnamed student rebel leader was quoted as saying: "Menzel should resign as head of FAMU. He spends most of his time hanging round the cafés of Hollywood, and none here teaching us." A petition had been raised to try to oust him. There was no comment from Mr Menzel.

The cult Hong Kong director, the writer of 'Darkman', and Van Damme meet on a set near New Orleans. Berenice Reynaud visits them and talks with Woo, overleaf

JOHN WOO'S ART ACTION MOVIE



● A foggy November morning in an unlikely-seeming location in the marshland between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The crew, carrying an assortment of portable telephones, cables and nasty-looking weapons, splashes through the rain-filled ruts dug by various vans and trailers. Stuntmen in helmets and black leathers ride motorcycles across the uneven ground. The plantation owners – frail and white-haired – seem oddly out of place, like will'-o-the-wisps from the swamp.

Neighbours have gathered too, remembering that in the distant past Charles Bronson shot a film here. The local police and volunteer firemen are on duty: a picturesque wooden shed, nested in the weeds of the Mississippi riverbank, is going to be blown to pieces, courtesy of Dale Martin, one of Hollywood's most highly regarded special effects professionals. John Woo, top-grossing Hong Kong action director and an international cult figure since his 1989 success *The Killer*, is shooting his first American movie, *Hard Target*. He is accompanied by the ever-modest Terence Chang: "I'm just the seventh or eighth producer. To smooth out language difficulties, I'm doing part of the AD's job, I prepare shot lists."

Soon after the release of *The Killer*, Woo and Chang founded their own company to produce *Bullet in the Head* (1990), a bloody tale of three young Chinese lost in 1967 Vietnam. This was followed by *Once a Thief* (1991), a charming comedy/thriller, and *Hard-Boiled* (1992), an intensely brutal police story in which the heroic protagonist hunts down an undercover cop passing for a killer. Woo was deluged with no less than 50 Hollywood scripts (Martin Scorsese, who adores *The Killer*, was even rumoured to want to produce Woo's next project; though Woo and Scorsese met, the latter is currently more interested in directing). Quentin Tarantino, whose *Reservoir Dogs* was visibly influenced by Woo's films, especially in the homoerotic choreography of gun-pointing that structures the ending, is writing a screenplay for his mentor. ("It's a very tightly structured kidnapping story, an almost perfect film for John," comments Chang.) The film will give Chow Yun-Fat – Woo's favourite actor and alter ego – his first English-speaking starring role.

An action-packed remake of Ernest B. Schoedsack's *The Most Dangerous Game*, *Hard Target* was penned by a young screenwriter Chuck Pfarrer, who turned to Hollywood after seven years in the Navy ("Yes, I have killed men. I was in combat in Lebanon for nine months"). Two of his screenplays have been turned into films: the eminently forgettable *Navy Seals*, and more importantly Sam Raimi's cult horror film *Darkman*. Pfarrer has "a deal" at Universal, and one day he received a phone call: "They said they were running something for me in the screening room... It was *The Killer*. When I came out I said I was convinced, and the next thing I knew I was on a plane to Hong Kong to meet John."

James Jacks and Sean Daniel of Alphaville Productions are *Hard Target*'s producers, along with Sam Raimi's and Robert Tapert's S & R Productions. Universal's participation is at the level of a negative pick-up, a relatively bold move on the part of a studio which has never

done action pictures before. Universal attracted Belgian martial artist Jean-Claude Van Damme, an admirer of Woo. Van Damme hopes that working with such a virtuoso will help him "cross the line" into a more Schwarzenegger-type career.

Even before directing part of *Once a Thief* in France, Woo was no stranger to foreign-location shooting. He made a number of low-budget films in Korea, then in Taiwan, until New Wave film-maker Tsui Hark, repaying an old debt (Woo had given him the opportunity to direct his first successful feature in the early 80s) produced *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), which became the top-grossing film in Hong Kong history. But despite his success, Woo has always felt a maverick, somehow "not Chinese enough". His international success is a source of controversy at home: some critics dismiss his cult status among English-speaking audiences as yet another example of Orientalism, or at best as cultural misunderstanding.

The recent fashion for Hong Kong cinema in the west has centred on action and genre films, largely ignoring other strands of the city's film production. Movies such as Stanley Kwan's *Actress* and *Too Happy for Words*, Wong Kar-wai's *The Days of Being Wild* and Lawrence Ah Mon's *Gangs* and *Queen of Temple Street* display modernist strategies for deconstructing history, sexuality, politics and the positioning of the subject that make Woo's films appear frozen in time. Not only, as he acknowledges, are his heroes paragons of a bygone code of honour, but there is no ambiguity, no shift of meaning in his narratives. The homoerotic nuances of his stories never suggest a more literal enactment of the fantasy, and in contrast with Tsui Hark's films, there are no gay characters to function as comic relief, foil or return of the repressed – no delightful sexual ambiguity either, as in the love scene with the man-turned-woman in Siu-Tung Ching's *Swordsman II*, produced by Tsui. In Woo's films, man is man, woman is woman, friendship is what it seems (except in the case of betrayal, which is a quasi-metaphysical abomination), and the narrative follows the laws of Aristotelian logic.

The Hong Kong Woo describes is conspicuously devoid of British characters. It is a space that escapes colonial history, a place determined not by a difference of cultures but by a plenitude of signs, a city to love with passion, to die for, and to die within (significantly at the end of *A Better Tomorrow*, the Chow Yun-Fat character, instead of fleeing with the money, turns back and gets killed in Hong Kong). Does Woo's *oeuvre* seduce us by encoding such romantic nostalgia within the strategies of classical western film-making? This is no idle question, for other games of Oriental/Occidental seduction are now in progress: that of Woo by America, and of America by Woo. Will success in Hollywood spoil him or will he impose his mark? Of course, the first non-Chinese star of one of his films is not an American either.

Many directors want to work with Van Damme, whose presence in a movie is an almost automatic guarantee of commercial success. Woo wasn't exactly first choice, but the studio hired him in the belief that he could

blow new life into an overused genre. Without him, Pfarrer claims, *Hard Target* would be just another of those American action films that have run their course. For Woo, there is much more at stake: "If *Hard Target* is not a commercial success, it will be impossible to make another film in Hollywood." Studio executives have played touch and go: "Even a month before shooting was supposed to start, they were trying to pull the plug," recalls Chang. "So we had only three and a half weeks of pre-production. And the budget was nowhere near realistic – we would need another \$2 million to be comfortable, which means we have to shoot six days a week. Now, after six weeks of shooting, we're four days behind, and they're blaming John – he's too slow, his shots are too complicated. I don't think it's fair."

Chang, a top producer in Hong Kong, has spent many years in the US, studying architecture in Oregon, then film at NYU. He is now a Canadian resident and has no desire to return to his native city: "I don't like what is happening in Hong Kong. Crimes, robberies every day... China is already exerting a lot of control. We never had much freedom in the film industry: today we can't criticise the colonial government, and tomorrow all creative freedom may be lost." Fearing the uncertainties of 1997, many middle-class Hong Kong residents are resettling in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US and more and more movies have this identity crisis as their theme. Shu Kei's *Sun-*



Dangerous liaisons: Van Damme, opposite; suffering at the hands of South African psycho Arnold Vosloo, above

less Days (homage to Chris Marker's *Sans soleil*) documents the upset caused by the 4 June massacre. Evans Chan's experimental fiction *To Liv(e)* shows two couples caught between the misrepresentation of Hong Kong in the west and their desire to emigrate. Clara Law's *Autumn Moon* tells of the bittersweet friendship between a Japanese tourist and a little girl whose parents have gone to Canada.

Movie stars (Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung) are establishing residence in Canada too: "There's enough talent in a city like Vancouver or Toronto to make a 100 per cent Hong Kong movie," jokes Chang. He intends to start producing films – and not only Chinese ones – in the US and Canada, but for the moment he's riding in Hollywood on the John Woo ticket. "If it weren't for John, I wouldn't be allowed to work here. But I like to think he's able to work here because I've come too." Friendship is ►

◀ not an empty word in Woo's life. After his collaboration with Tsui Hark, he has found a true partner in Chang, whose professionalism, courtesy and reliability are a match to his own talent. It's a case of Chinese brotherhood: you help me, I help you, and together we'll make it.

Woo and Chang are the only Chinese on the set. Teamsters have been recruited locally, but most of the crew comes from Los Angeles. Some members worry that their last film, Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead III: Army of Darkness*, may have rating problems (in the US, *The Killer* got X-rated for violence). At first worried that he was not able to bring his action director to New Orleans, Woo is now getting along beautifully with stunt co-ordinator Billy Burton. In spite of the heavy shooting schedule – 12, 14 hours a day – the crew is taken by Woo's charm and brilliant professionalism. Even his hesitant English works in his favour. While absolutely precise in giving directions on the set, during breaks he smiles and takes his time, unless he explodes into passionate Cantonese, effortlessly translated by Chang. "Look how hard the crew works," says Pfarrer. "They think they're making something special; an art action movie, probably the first one of its kind in America."

The plot of *Hard Target* is simple, even cartoonish, with a hard-boiled romanticism that must have appealed to Woo. A young woman Natasha (Yancy Butler) comes to New Orleans to look for her long-lost father. She meets Chance Boudreaux (Van Damme), an unemployed seaman who, needing \$217 to pay his union dues and board the next departing ship, agrees to help her. He uncovers the unpleasant activities of an elegant piece of Euro-trash (Lance Henriksen) and his side-kick, a white South African psycho (Arnold Vosloo), who for a substantial fee hire out homeless war veterans for rich men to hunt down in the swamps. Chance's snooping angers the villains, who set him up as prey for their clients. The script has pages on nine different colours – one for every draft. Pfarrer is on the set, day in, day out, at hand for the rewrites. "John knows his stuff. For a writer, it's fantastic. What we're ending up with is much better than what I wrote."

For example, Woo has transformed a chase

scene into a stunt never attempted on film before, a head-on collision, almost lyrical in its choreographed violence, between a motorcycle and a car. Yet he keeps on soliciting Pfarrer's advice, with his usual generosity and modesty. As Pfarrer explains, "Hong Kong and US action films have different rules: an American hero would never use a knife – unless he's taking it away from the bad guy – and if the bad guy is hanging from a cliff, the good guy has to help him." But Pfarrer is there for another reason too: "I'm learning at the feet of a master. I'm in line to direct myself. Before I came here and saw John work, I thought I might be ready, but now, I just want to watch him."

Other changes have been made to suit Van Damme's style. "We've had to adjust the dialogue for him," says Pfarrer, "and we've lost some bits of subtlety. However, he's a very physical actor, who comes alive on the screen and can project emotions without saying a word. Like a young Steve McQueen. And he's more charming than many action stars. He's attractive: he could be a matinee idol."

On set, Van Damme is charming but aloof. While the entire crew and cast eat together, he lunches alone in his trailer, on a special body-builder's diet. For him, *Hard Target* represents an opportunity to act the romantic hero, as when Natasha learns of her father's death. Shot in a picturesque jazz club in New Orleans' *vieux carré*, the scene begins as the camera moves from the face of the elderly bluesman who is performing to the couple sitting at a table. As the young woman cries silently, Van Damme holds her hand, comforting her in a low voice. The camera completes a long, sensual take. "Cut!" (uttered by Woo, this command becomes a primal scream). "This was beautiful, but we'll do it again." After four takes, the shot is in the can. Smoothly, with the supreme ease Woo displays on every set.

The same evening the crew watches rushes. While a bit corny in the intimate scenes, Van Damme's ponytail looks great when he's flying through the air in slow motion. Hunted by an impressive array of cars and motorcycles, he seeks shelter inside an abandoned sugar mill. A thug follows him. Suddenly, a motorcycle in flames mounted by a leather-clad puppet representing the dead villain bursts through a large window. "We ran a cable and slid the motorcy-

cle along it," explains Dale Martin. The spectacular stunt was performed only once, but for such scenes Woo runs six or seven cameras simultaneously, offering long takes from different angles that will later be spliced together in an orgy of fire, explosion and motion.

Back on the plantation while the experts are putting the final touches to their pyrotechnics, the motorcycle stuntmen are at work. Henriksen and Vosloo are leading the pack, encircling the shed in which Chance's uncle brews illegal whiskey. A motorcyclist takes off his helmet, revealing the long hair and fine features of a young woman. She's Billy Burton's daughter, raised "as a tomboy" to do stunts from an early age. "I did one dangerous thing on this film," she recalls. "I had to jump off a bridge with another stuntman into the back of a moving train. To time the jump and make sure we were both going at the same time, we dropped lemons, which fall at the speed of your body."

The big moment arrives. The young PAs round up the onlookers, pushing them away from the action. The cameras are rolling. An explosion resounds and pieces of charred lumber fall from the air. The shed has vanished. The script describes the moonshiner's lair as bursting into flames, but Woo, fearing this might damage the vegetation, opted instead for a clean, combustionless explosion.

The same evening Woo, Chang and some journalists are feasting at a Japanese restaurant. While Woo seems to have adapted quite well to life in America, there is one point where he draws the line: food. So in the state of chicken gumbo and jambalaya, he stubbornly looks for Chinese restaurants (an almost impossible task) or Japanese *haute cuisine*. At *The Shogun*, after a few *sakes*, he becomes animated, his eyes smiling with kindness and cinematic passion. He talks about the first film he shot in Vietnam, *Heroes Shed No Tears* – once again the tale of his solitary fight against studio politics. The script was idiotic, crude, unnecessarily sexual and exploitative, so he changed it, turning it in the process into a much better film. But the studio hated it, changed it back, and eventually shelved it until the success of *A Better Tomorrow*.

He also talks of martial arts director Zhang Cheh. This is not a subject on which Woo dwells easily, but in 1986 he had said in an interview for the Hong Kong Film Festival catalogue that the man had influenced him "not so much in his way of portraying violence but his unrestrained way of writing emotions and chivalry. Chinese cinema has always been too low-key. We should be more expressive, put more of ourselves into our films."

The quote is revealing. The expressionist qualities the west so admires in Woo's films, far from being a given in his culture, are something he has had to fight to introduce. Hence, perhaps, his solitude, his feelings of "un-Chineseness". Woo himself is reserved, gentle, almost shy, a man who likes to keep his mystery, his privacy. But shouldn't one expect such paradoxes from someone who may be the best action director in the world, yet confesses he's never fired a gun in his life, or, even better, that he doesn't know how to drive?

With the greatest of ease: Van Damme rushes away from the action in one of the pyrotechnic sequences of 'Hard Target'



John Woo talks about making comedies, Cantonese opera and the American experience. Translated by Terence Chang

Woo in interview

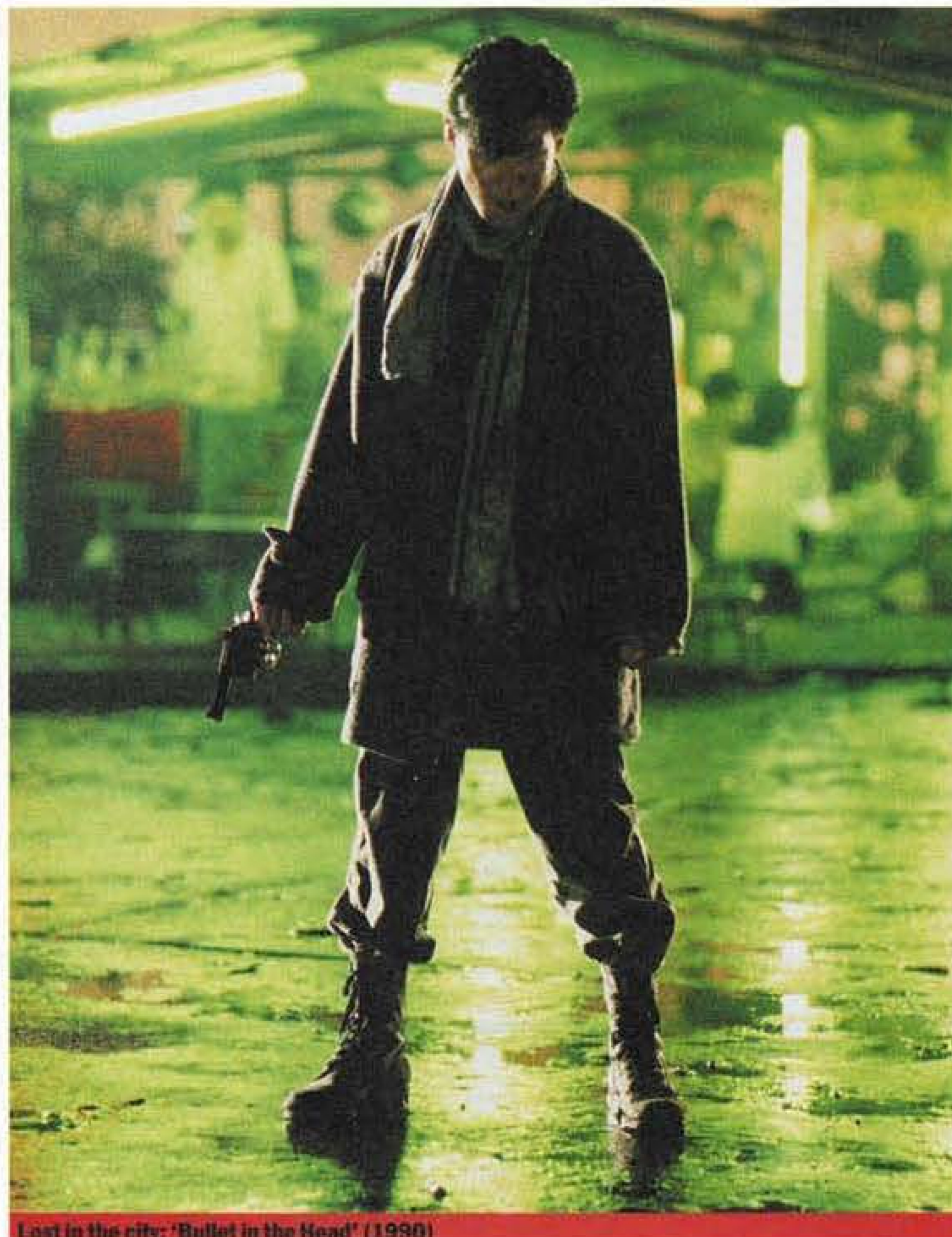
“ I started to make films – existential love stories – when I was in school. I was part of a small group of people who were stimulated by European art films, the French New Wave and contemporary Japanese cinema and were experimenting with film.

“I didn’t go to film school because my family was too poor. The studios were very conservative and the industry was corrupt. Then in 1969 a company called Cathay welcomed a new generation of intellectuals and our whole group went in. I became a continuity person and was able to save enough money to keep on making experimental films. I was also writing film criticism.

“I later worked for the Shaw Brothers as an assistant director to martial arts director Zhang Cheh for *Boxer from Shantung* and *Blood Brothers*. In 1973 I was hired to co-direct an independent low-budget film called *Young Dragons*, which was eventually banned in Hong Kong because it was too violent. It lost money, and was sold to Golden Harvest, where they signed me up for three years. I directed kung-fu pictures – often shot in Korea for 200,000 HK dollars. This is not what I wanted to do, but I was under a lot of pressure. I was 27, and the youngest director working at Golden Harvest. Some people were assistant directors for more than 10 years before they were allowed to direct.

“Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung worked as stuntmen for me. I recognised their potential and gave Chan his first acting part in *Countdown in Kung Fu* (aka *The Hand of Death*, 1975). Then I made a Cantonese opera film, *Princess Chang Ping* (1975), which was very popular. Later I worked as a production consultant to help the great comedian Michael Hui on his first two films: *Games Gamblers Play* and *The Private Eyes*. And it was the comedy *Money Crazy* (aka *The Pilferer’s Progress*), a smash hit in 1977, that really established me. In 1981, after my 17th movie, I left Golden Harvest to direct the first picture of a newly founded company, Cinema City.

“My film *Laughing Times* (1981) made money, and I was willing to accept a much lower director’s fee for the opportunity to make the films I wanted. To my disappointment, the studio wanted me to do nothing but comedies. That was one of the worst times of my life. The three owners of Cinema City, finding me ‘too old-fashioned’, sent me to Taiwan, where I was stuck for over two years. They let me direct two films there, but the less said about them the better. When I returned to Hong Kong, Tsui Hark,



Lost in the city: ‘Bullet in the Head’ (1990)

who was starting his own production company, the Film Workshop, offered me a job. This is how we came to collaborate on *A Better Tomorrow*. A lot of the emotion behind the film reflects my friendship with Hark.

“*A Better Tomorrow* develops an idea we both had, though basically it was I who wrote the script. Apart from the Cantonese opera film, I always wrote my own screenplays, even for the comedies – in this I’m an exception in Hong Kong, where directors mostly rely on others to write screenplays. For *A Better Tomorrow*, Tsui Hark first wanted to do a film about three women, and I changed it to three men. We both agreed that the film should stress human values, and Hark encouraged me to project my own feelings. The result was much better,

much richer than he had expected.

“*The Killer* was my idea. Jean-Pierre Melville influenced me a lot, and I always wanted to make a film like *Le Samourai*. Professionally, I’m a loner, so I can identify with the solitary assassin. I also wanted to stress that justice is a universal value, shared by people who lead completely different lives. My killer is not very contemporary: he’s a killer from several centuries ago, when they killed for a reason.

“As a Protestant, I am strongly influenced by Christian beliefs about love, sin, redemption. I designed the final scene of *The Killer* in a church because for the protagonist it is the only peaceful place in the world. I spent a lot of money to make the perfect Virgin Mary statue: when it is



Killing fields: ‘Hard-Boiled’ (1992)

shot to pieces, truth is destroyed by evil, and with it the spirit of chivalry displayed by ancient warriors. In *A Better Tomorrow*, when Chow Yun-Fat is beaten up, the villain takes his scarf and wipes his hand; when Christ was crucified, Pilate washed his hands.

“I had a *Pietà* image during the killing of the young bomb-thrower in *Bullet in the Head* to stress the special impact the incident has on the three main characters, and because, regardless of politics, all killings are ugly. I only dramatised a scene that really happened: I saw, in a documentary, a kid taken away from the street and shot.

“*Bullet in the Head* takes place in 1967 because it was a dramatic year in Hong Kong: there were riots and people got killed. I chose the Vietnam war to demonstrate that war can turn good into evil and bring out the worst in human behaviour. I was an anti-war activist in 1969 and 1970 and went to a lot of demonstrations and rallies. I also wanted to use Vietnam as a mirror for what’s going to happen in Hong Kong in 1997.

“I always supervise the editing of my films and edited some of the sequences of *The Killer*, like the dragon-boat chase, myself. I also edited the final duel in *Bullet in the Head* and inserted the flash-back shots alluding to the protagonists’ teenage friendship. The duels in my films have a multiplicity of meanings. I believe that good will eventually triumph over evil, but it’s going to be at a cost – of the good being misunderstood, or segregated. I am a pessimist, but I believe that the only possible redemption is from a religious point of view.

“I think I will stay in the United States. I know I can work here and make better movies than in Hong Kong. In some ways, I’m not very Chinese. My techniques, my themes, my film language are not traditionally Chinese.

“*Hard Target* is my first American film. It’s my chance to gain experience in a totally foreign environment. I need the film to establish myself commercially in Hollywood. But in the future, I’ll be writing my own scripts. And people like Quentin Tarantino, who knows my films very well, are writing scripts for me.

“The methods of the American crew are not so different from those in Hong Kong, but they are more professional. In Hong Kong the technicians work very hard, we’ve known each other for a very long time and they really understand what I want, but they were not trained by experience, by going to film school.

“I had shot in synch sound only once before, for the Cantonese opera film. It is not difficult at all, because I know this technique very well. In Hong Kong I routinely used several cameras. I shot in the American way. The most difficult thing for me here is to learn how to handle the studio politics. It can be very frustrating at times.

How do cultists help define 'great cinema'? And what do the 'Sight and Sound' top tens reveal about the history of taste? By Peter Wollen

● In the last year there has been a cascade of new releases of director's cuts and classic films, including *Fantasia* and *Blade Runner*. One of them was the MGM musical *Singin' in the Rain*, about which I wrote a book in the BFI's Film Classics series. There I suggested why *Singin' in the Rain* had come third in the *Sight and Sound* world critics' top ten list of 1982. Its rapid rise to classic status reflected both the rise of auteurism and a post-modern interest in pastiche and self-reflexivity, and critics had also been directly reminded of the film's claims by the release of the MGM musical compilation film, *That's Entertainment*. Then, at the end of last year, *Sight and Sound* published its fourth tabulation of top ten lists by critics from all over the world, ending up with a new master list that, in effect, presented a revised canon of great films. *Singin' in the Rain* had vanished completely. What had happened? Why did some films – *Citizen Kane*, *La Règle du jeu*, *Vertigo*, *The Searchers*, *Battleship Potemkin* – survive and others disappear?

In general, it is only during periods of challenge to the canon that its underlying assumptions are made explicit. In fact, most of the time the canon is slowly evolving, in a state of low-level flux. Marginal adjustments are being made all the time and even its central pillars are not necessarily set in concrete. It is a work of bricolage. New elements are added and outmoded areas tacitly discarded. It is patched up and pushed in one direction or another, through a complex process of cultural negotiation among a motley set of cultural gate-keepers and taste-makers. These gate-keepers both influence opinion and make influential practical decisions.

First, there is the key role played by archivists. Archives decide which films to preserve and, through their film programming

policy, which films to screen. They are the source of prints for retrospectives at festivals and in cinémathèques. Preservation, of course, is the foundation of the whole enterprise of evaluation. While *films maudits* can survive for some time without anyone actually seeing them, in the end their reputation is bound to suffer. The older the film, the more crucial the role of the archive. Archive policy is particularly significant in determining which films will survive from the silent period and even from the 30s and 40s. It is archivists, too, who decide in the first instance which 'rediscovered masterpieces' to launch on the world for critics and others to consider.

It is worth dwelling on the function of archives at some length because I believe they have always played a key role in taste and canon formation and that this is likely to increase in weight and scope as more and more films go out of commercial circulation. Looking back to the revolution in the canon engineered in the 60s by the *Cahiers du cinéma* group, it is clear how much this depended on the exhibition policies of Henri Langlois at the Cinémathèque Française in Paris. Similarly, my own auteurist re-appraisals of the 60s were largely dependent on sitting in the front row at the National Film Theatre. The Edinburgh Film Festival later played a similar role in promoting, for instance, the critical boom in the films of Douglas Sirk, which subsequently broadened out, in conjunction with feminist film study, into a boom in melodrama as a genre.

Cult or mainstream

Second to the role of archives comes that of academics and critics – overlapping categories, of course. Academics play a key role not only in influencing young minds and writing books and articles, but also by choosing films for classroom screenings or drawing up required viewing lists, which function something like foundation lists of great books, although without the same authority. In teaching a PhD seminar on the idea of a film canon in Los Angeles, I was struck that the students, themselves future academics, critics, archivists and programmers, formed their own lists out of films first seen in three ways, in this order: class

screenings, repertory cinemas or cinémathèques, and videocassette (reminding us that film studios too have their own archives and archivists).

Critics publish articles and, less ephemerally, books. They draw up most of the top ten and other similar lists, which academics feel a little embarrassed by. These lists, however, can have a considerable impact. I used to study the *Cahiers* lists avidly, both to measure my own judgments and as a source of films I should make an effort to see. They also acted as markers for their makers' politique of taste, challenging readers to agree with them or to be prepared to argue back. It is critics who are mainly responsible for opinion-forming 'buzz' or word of mouth, which reaches a crescendo at film festivals – the site of retrospectives as well as of new releases and the crucial circuit for an international exchange of views on what's good and what's bad, who's up and who's down. This buzz in turn filters through to academics and archivists, as they strive to keep abreast of events.

Next, less obvious perhaps, comes the role of film-makers. This is institutionalised at formal events like the Academy Awards, which present to the outside world the image of taste to which the Hollywood industry aspires, and involve an implicit trade-off between respect for the box office, acknowledgment of professional standing, and aesthetic evaluation, all filtered through a sieve of unstated assumptions that allows dramas and costume pictures and films with important themes through more readily than horror movies or musicals. The Oscars, too, serve as a kind of caricature of mainstream, midcult values against which both mandarin and radical critics can react in constructing their own rival canons.

But film-makers also have their own informal view of their peers which in turn can feed subterraneously through into critical discourse. They have a feeling for the ambitiousness or originality of other people's projects, as well as a wish to place their own work within a historic tradition or to pay their debt to the people who influenced them. The most obvious recent example of this is the role played by Coppola and Scorsese in the re-evaluation of Kurosawa or the rediscovery of Powell and Pressburger. Film-makers' criteria spring from the somewhat different way of looking at films that making them entails. They include, for example, a particular sense of craft.

Film-makers have to decide that this take or this edit is the 'best', to try to make their film as good as possible. Many different people, with different degrees of vehemence and from different positions of power, express preferences based both on their personal sense of taste and on a deeper sense of what is aesthetically right

FILMS

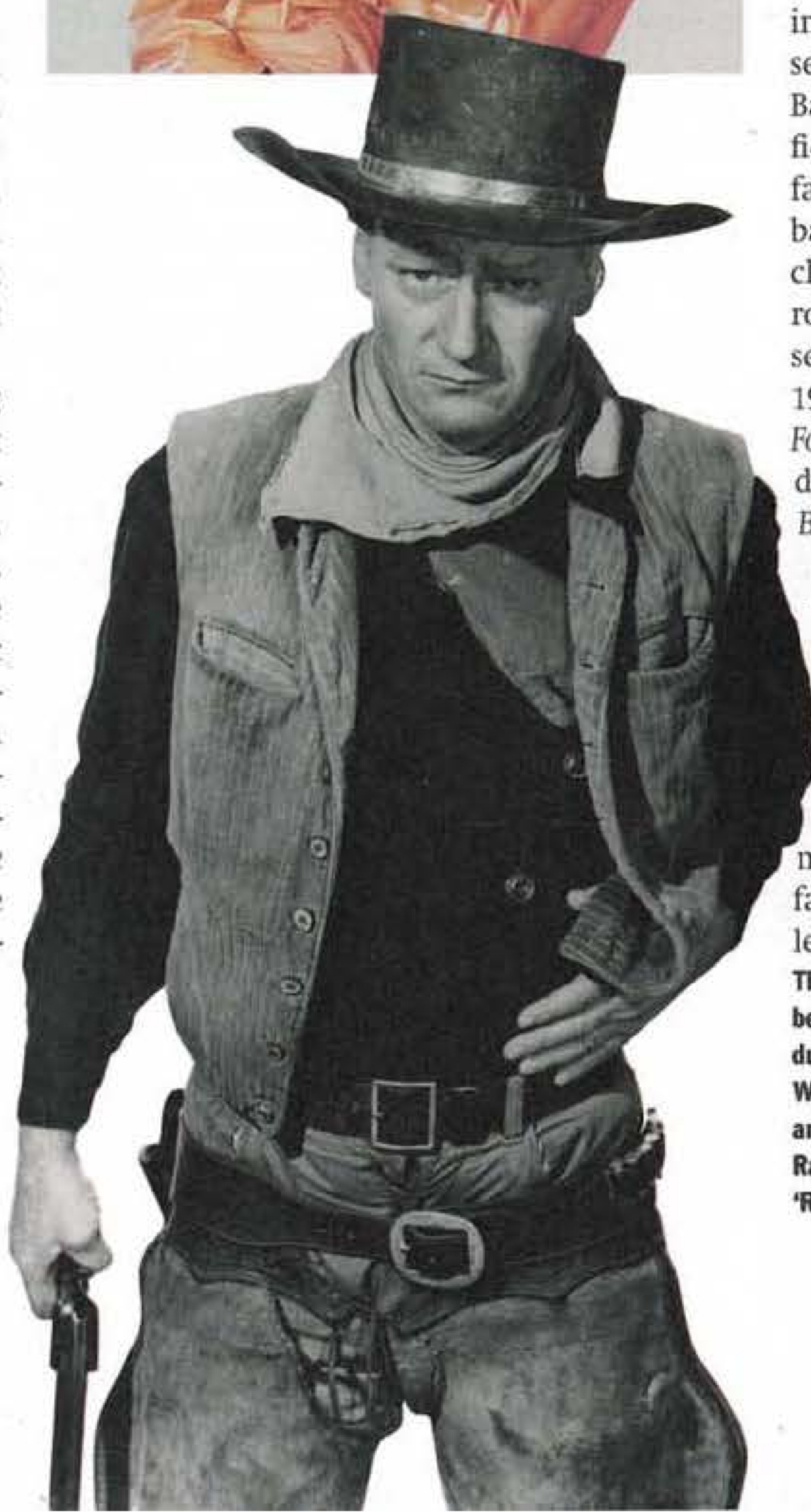
WHY DO SOME SURVIVE AND OTHERS DISAPPEAR?

or wrong. There is an assumption both of shared values which make intersubjective communication and dialogue possible, and at the same time of divergences within that common framework. If the divergences become too acute, the framework dissolves and the film-making process becomes a nightmare. The film will be bad.

Finally, of course, there is the audience. Here, I want to note in particular the role played by film buffs and cultists. This is a special sub-group of spectators who feel unusually enthusiastic about one genre, one director or even one favourite film. Not only are cultists organised, putting on their own screenings and events, but they exert pressure on exhibitors and critics through their dedication. In fact, many critics and archivists and even academics emerge out of the ranks of cultists. It could even be argued that the *Cahiers* critics were themselves cultists in origin, nurtured in the tiny ciné-clubs of the Left Bank, which they attended in virtual art gangs. Andrew Sarris, it is worth recalling, published a book titled *Confessions of a Cultist* and drew heavily in constructing his pantheon on a cultist *sang pur*, Eugene Archer. I too frequented backstreet repertory theatres like the Electric, the Ben Hur and the Tolmer (and the cultist Mayfair Club), where I familiarised myself with a backlog of Hollywood pictures recommended by the *Cahiers* critics. I ticked them off in Boisset and Tavernier's *Twenty Years of American Cinema* after I had seen them, until the book was grubby with ink.

Cultists play an apparently disproportionate role precisely because they care deeply (obsessively) about the films they love and constitute them spontaneously into a kind of cult canon. The key transition occurs when they go public, and begin to argue the merits of their canon with outsiders instead of just celebrating them in semi-private cliques. Sometimes the line is hard to draw: are *The Wizard of Oz* and *Casablanca* cult classics or mainstream masterpieces? And are *Now Voyager* and *Mildred Pierce* feminist cult films or counterparts and rivals to the auteurist classics *Red River* and *The Searchers*?

The process of cultural negotiation among these many gate-keepers of taste results not only in the surface phenomena of lists and programmes, but also in the crystallisation of an implicit aesthetic paradigm at a deeper level. When we look at the history of film taste we can see three contending phases of aesthetic theory-making. First came the seventh art theories which grew up around the silent cinema and stressed *photogénie*, montage or filmic pantomime. These, in turn, were locked into certain exemplary films – *Battleship Potemkin* or *The Gold Rush* – which served as linchpins for the construction of a canon. Of these, only *Battle-*



ship *Potemkin* has survived as a constant in the *Sight and Sound* pantheon, although Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* made a curious comeback in 1992.

Silent film theory fought a long rearguard action through the 30s and was not really challenged until André Bazin launched his counter-theory on the basis of Italian neo-realism (especially Rossellini), Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* and Welles' *Citizen Kane*, which were the foundation of the second phase of canon construction. The role played by *Citizen Kane* and *La Règle du jeu*, which have become the perennial top two in the *Sight and Sound* lists, is particularly striking. Why did they rise so fast and then show such staying power?

Bazin to Borges

Bazin saw these films, I would argue, as signalling an end to the studio-dominated 30s and the beginning of a new epoch – one which coincided, of course, with the defeat of fascism and the beginning of the post-war era in Europe (with a new world role for America). They represented the possibility of a new direction for cinema at a moment when new directions were called for. In this sense, they indeed form part of a more general shift in taste, along with neo-realism, as Bazin indicated. But whereas neo-realism could be seen as nationally and historically limited and one-dimensional in its basic aesthetic, *Citizen Kane* and *La Règle du jeu* are more complex, open to multiple and even contradictory interpretations.

Bazin, for instance, argued that *Citizen Kane* was a realist film. Welles' use of deep focus and the long take went against the artificial doctrines of classical construction. Moreover, contrary to Sartre's view (Sartre was the first to introduce the film to the French public, having seen it in America before it opened in Paris), Bazin saw it as on the side of freedom (depth of field = no manipulative editing) rather than fatality, as argued by Sartre, who saw the flashback structure as a sign that the story was concluded in advance, allowing the characters no room for existential choice. Nevertheless, Bazin seems to have had some doubts: in his own 1952 ten best list, he chose Wyler's *The Little Foxes* rather than *Citizen Kane* as the exemplary deep-focus film, alongside *La Règle du jeu* and *Bicycle Thieves*.

Bazin's disciple, François Truffaut, took a very different line. He came to see the film as a masterpiece, not of realism, but of artifice, full of tricks and devices. He placed it, like Bazin, in a tradition which derives from Murnau, by which he meant not Bazin's Murnau of long takes and elaborate camera movements, but instead the Murnau who built fantastic *trompe l'oeil* sets. For Truffaut's colleague, Eric Rohmer, *Citizen Kane* was the ►

The good, the great and the beautiful: Renoir's 'La Règle du jeu', top; Minelli's 'The Wizard of Oz' and Donen and Kelly's 'Singin' in the Rain', centre; and Hawks' 'Red River', left

◀ film with which American cinema left its pre-history behind. He saw it as pointing forward to the work of Mankiewicz (Joseph, not Herman) and introducing a new complexity of dramatic structure. Their follower, Andrew Sarris, described it as an "American baroque" film, going visually beyond Hollywood classicism into a realm of excess, a view contested by Pauline Kael, who saw the film verbally through the glass of the Algonquin wits.

In 1941, the great Argentinian writer, Borges, also a film critic for *Sur*, was fascinated by aspects of *Citizen Kane* which echoed his own work: the labyrinth without a centre, the play of mask and identity, the jigsaw puzzle, the paradoxes of the detective story. Many years later, in my 1975 *Introduction to 'Citizen Kane'*, I saw the film as pointing forwards to *Last Year in Marienbad*. More recently, Michael Denning has argued that *Citizen Kane* should be seen in relation to the Popular Front Theater from which Welles emerged, while Laura Mulvey, in her recent *Film Classics* book on the film, has placed it in the political context of isolationism and New Deal anti-fascism.

Classic obsessives

A similar range of readings can be made of *La Règle du jeu*. This too was a personal film that emerged out of Renoir's previous involvement with Popular Front Theater. It reveals something of the same fascination with the modern media and the new type of hero associated with them. (André Jurieux is a child of the new age of radio and aviation.) In fact, radio is used explicitly to structure the beginning of the film and to establish its central characters, whereas in *Citizen Kane* radio techniques are used in delivery of dialogue and post-production to create the texture of the soundtrack.

While Bazin saw *La Règle du jeu* as a realist film, it is also possible to see it, as Truffaut saw

Citizen Kane, as a work of conscious artifice. Just as Welles placed his modern hero in a Shakespearean or Conradian setting, so Renoir placed his in a setting derived from Marivaux and de Musset. Both films mix genres – Welles tragedy, bio-pic and detective story; Renoir romantic comedy, tragedy and bedroom farce. Both films were seen as breaking the rules of narrative construction, although in very different directions. Finally, both were *films maudits*, blindly rejected by industry, critics and public when they were first released. Thus they could be cast by later generations in the role of martyrs for the cause of cinema, premonitory films whose promise came to fruition only years – indeed decades – later.

At the same time, these two films were sufficiently rich and open to be available to critics of different outlook, in different periods and in different cultural situations. As Frank Kermode argues in his book on 'The Classic', permanence (as a classic, or within a canon) means not that a work is timeless because its meaning or value is frozen across time, but precisely because it proves itself susceptible to a range of different readings and evaluations across time (and across cultures).

The third major revision of the canon took place when Bazin was overtaken by his own heirs – the *Cahiers du cinéma* group – who accentuated the role of his favoured directors, but simultaneously introduced the new taste for Hollywood auteurism and Hitchcock-Hawksianism (*Vertigo*, *Red River*). Auteurism was much more explicit in its canon construction than Bazin had been and set out to provide an entirely fresh and comprehensive mapping of Hollywood film. By emphasising the role of the director, the new critics were looking for predecessors or analogues in America for the new wave of auteur directors who had appeared in Europe, the creators of a contemporary European 'art cinema'. Thus the *Cahiers* critics reinterpreted Bazin's hero, Rossellini, not as a neo-realist but as the forerunner of Fellini, Antonioni, Bergman and, eventually, themselves.

With auteurism came new entries into the pantheon: Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and Ford's *The Searchers*. These are films which could be seen on the one hand as exemplary instances of the classic Hollywood genres, made by the old masters, and on the other as portraits and celebrations of darkly obsessive personalities, not altogether unlike those required for success as an auteur film-maker. The rise in reputation of both films reflects the *Cahiers* preference for late films, even 'testaments', as well as another important *Cahiers* tenet – a preference for the modernity of wide screen, stars, colour, music and location rather than the antiquity of academy ratio, actors, black and white, silence and

studio filming. Compared with, say, *Psycho* or *My Darling Clementine*, *Vertigo* and *The Searchers* are picturesque, lush, post-CinemaScope.

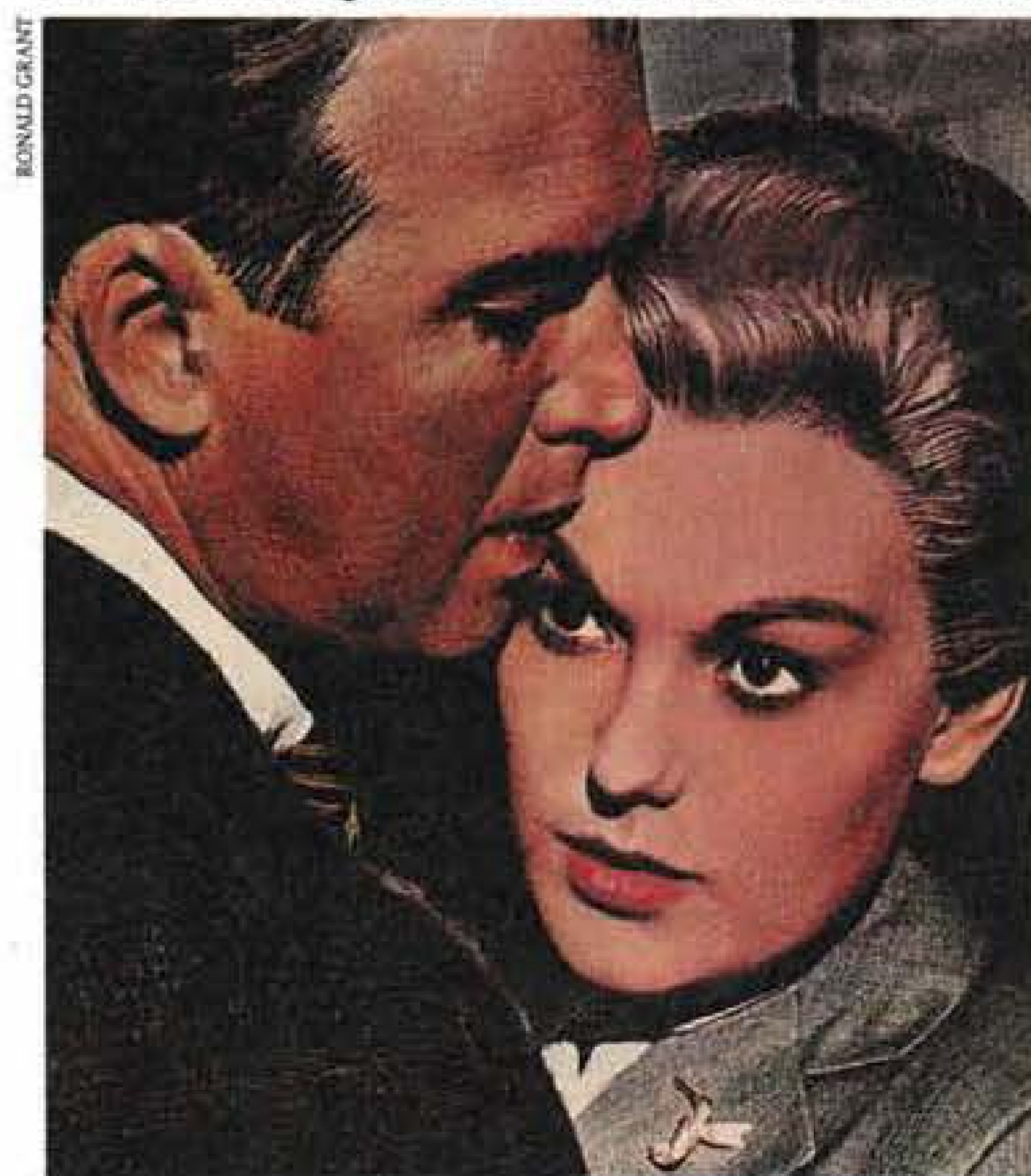
Now, perhaps, we can begin to ask what the future might hold. The most recent film on the pivotal 1962 *Sight and Sound* list was Antonioni's *L'avventura*, released in 1960, only two years earlier. In 1972, it was Bergman's *Persona*, first shown five years before. In 1982 came Fellini's *8½*, first shown 19 years earlier, even before *Persona*. And in the critics' 1992 poll, Kubrick's *2001*, released 24 years earlier, scraped in at number ten. The most recent European film in the 1992 poll is *La Règle du jeu* (just preceding *Citizen Kane*, the first American one). The canon has indeed begun to freeze.

Goodbye to the 60s

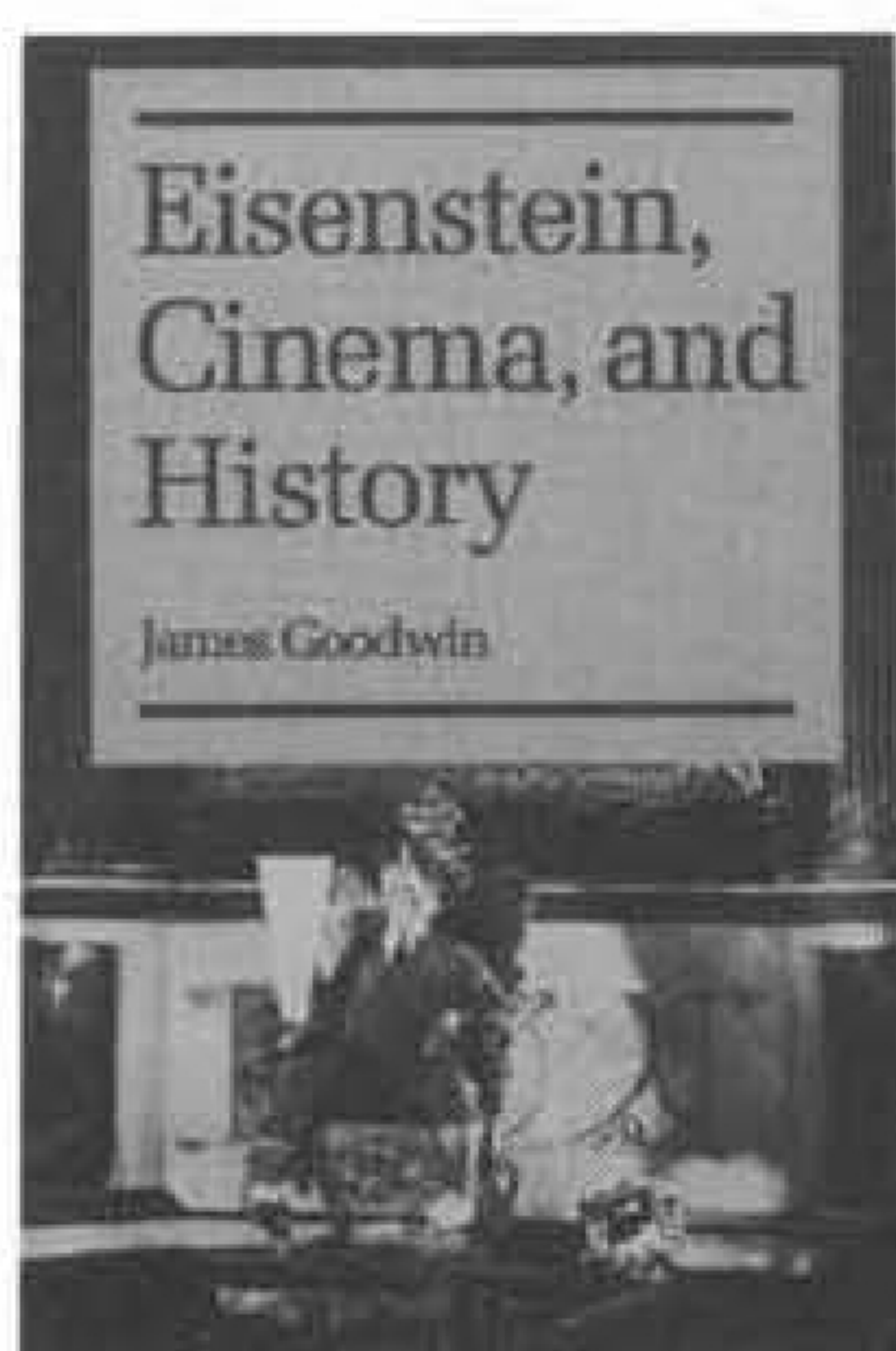
The time certainly seems ripe for a new revolution in taste, taking us beyond the upheaval of the 60s. The auteurism of those years was more than a theory of 'authorship' in the cinema; it involved championing a specific set of film-makers, both in the past and immediate present. These were the new auteurs celebrated in critical articles and named, in hierarchical order, in the *Cahiers* annual top ten lists, in *Movie* magazine's histogram of British and American directors, and in Andrew Sarris' pantheon (two versions, with promotions and demotions which I studied carefully). Lists may seem trivial, but in fact they are crucial indices of underlying struggles over taste, evaluation and the construction of a canon.

And changes in the canon are crucially linked to changes in film-making. As the *Cahiers* critics saw it, the overthrow of the existing regime of taste was a precondition for the triumph of new film-makers with new films, demanding to be judged on a different scale of values. Like the Surrealists or the Leavisites, they mobilised the old to support the new. Today, if the current canon is to be unfrozen, the impetus must come from a challenge, not simply to the New Hollywood, but also to the festival regime first established at the time of the New Wave film-makers. Surely there are no more New Waves to be discovered at festivals around the world. Indeed, the current search for a New Wave inside America itself, now that Latin America, Africa and Asia have been exhaustively examined for New Waves to discover, simply shows the decadence of the whole concept.

A new cinema will create a new film history with it, perhaps deliberately, perhaps by accident. And we can be sure that, in its absence, the canon will continue to petrify. The art form of the twentieth century will dwindle and die, as stained glass and tapestry died before it. Only a new revolution of taste can rescue cinema from the jaws of death.



'Vertigo' by Hitchcock, one of the figures transformed into an auteur by the 'Cahiers du cinéma' group, who needed to find precedents for their own ambitions



Eisenstein, Cinema and History

JAMES GOODWIN

James Goodwin treats issues of revolutionary history and historical representation as central to an understanding of Eisenstein's work, which explores two central movements within Soviet

history and consciousness: the Bolshevik Revolution and the Stalinist state. Goodwin articulates intersections between Eisenstein's ideas and aspects of the thought of Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukacs, Ernst Bloch, and Bertolt Brecht. Individual chapters focus on *Strike*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *October*, *Old and New*, projects of the 1930s, Alexander Nevsky, and *Ivan the Terrible*.

"Goodwin sustains a persuasive argument." — Vance Kepley, Jr., author of *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko*.

Illus. Cl: \$43.95; Pb: \$18.70

University of Illinois Press

c/o Trevor Brown Associates • Malet Street • London WC1E 7JA



UNIVERSITY
OF OXFORD
Department for
CONTINUING
EDUCATION

CERTIFICATE IN FILM STUDIES

*open to continuing education and
Open University students*

This Certificate is based in Oxford and consists of 2 separate modules each requiring one year of part-time study running from January to December. Each module includes a one week summer school which is held at Rewley House in Oxford.

Subjects covered in recent modules:

**Realism - Genre - Directors - Comedy -
Gender - Third (World) Cinema**

For each module successfully completed, students can also receive a full Open University credit at second level. These credits will be graded and can count towards honours degree classification. Credits will also be transferable in the CNA Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme.

For information on the 1994 Film Studies module, please contact

The Registry Secretary, OUDCE
1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA
Tel: Oxford (0865) 270360; Fax: (0865) 270309

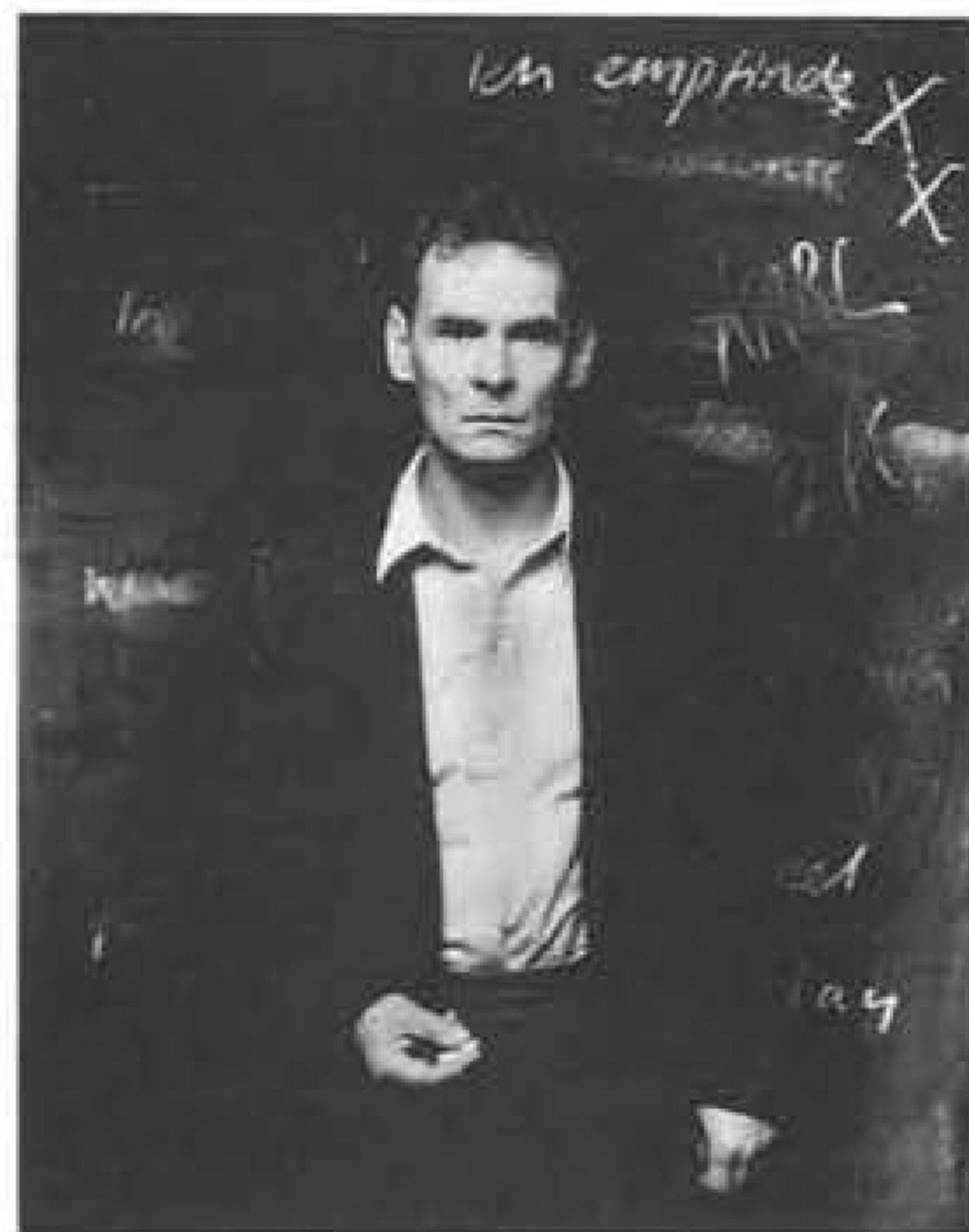
in
collaboration
with the

Open
University

New from BFI Publishing

WITTGENSTEIN

The Terry Eagleton Script
The Derek Jarman Film



This sumptuously illustrated book includes both Terry Eagleton's original screenplay and the shooting script from which Derek Jarman crafted his remarkable film.

A fascinating document which also includes reflections on Wittgenstein, biography and film.

Available now from all good
bookshops, £14.95

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
bfi

VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

FILM PROGRAM

AN INTENSIVE AWARD-WINNING ONE-YEAR CURRICULUM PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE FOUNDATION IN FILM PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES.

FEATURES: MORE HANDS-ON PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE THAN MOST FOUR-YEAR PROGRAMS. INDUSTRY INSTRUCTORS, SMALL CLASS SIZE, 16MM PROFESSIONAL HARDWARE.

3D ANIMATION

THE MOST CONCENTRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE HIGH-END COMPUTER ANIMATION PROGRAM IN NORTH AMERICA.

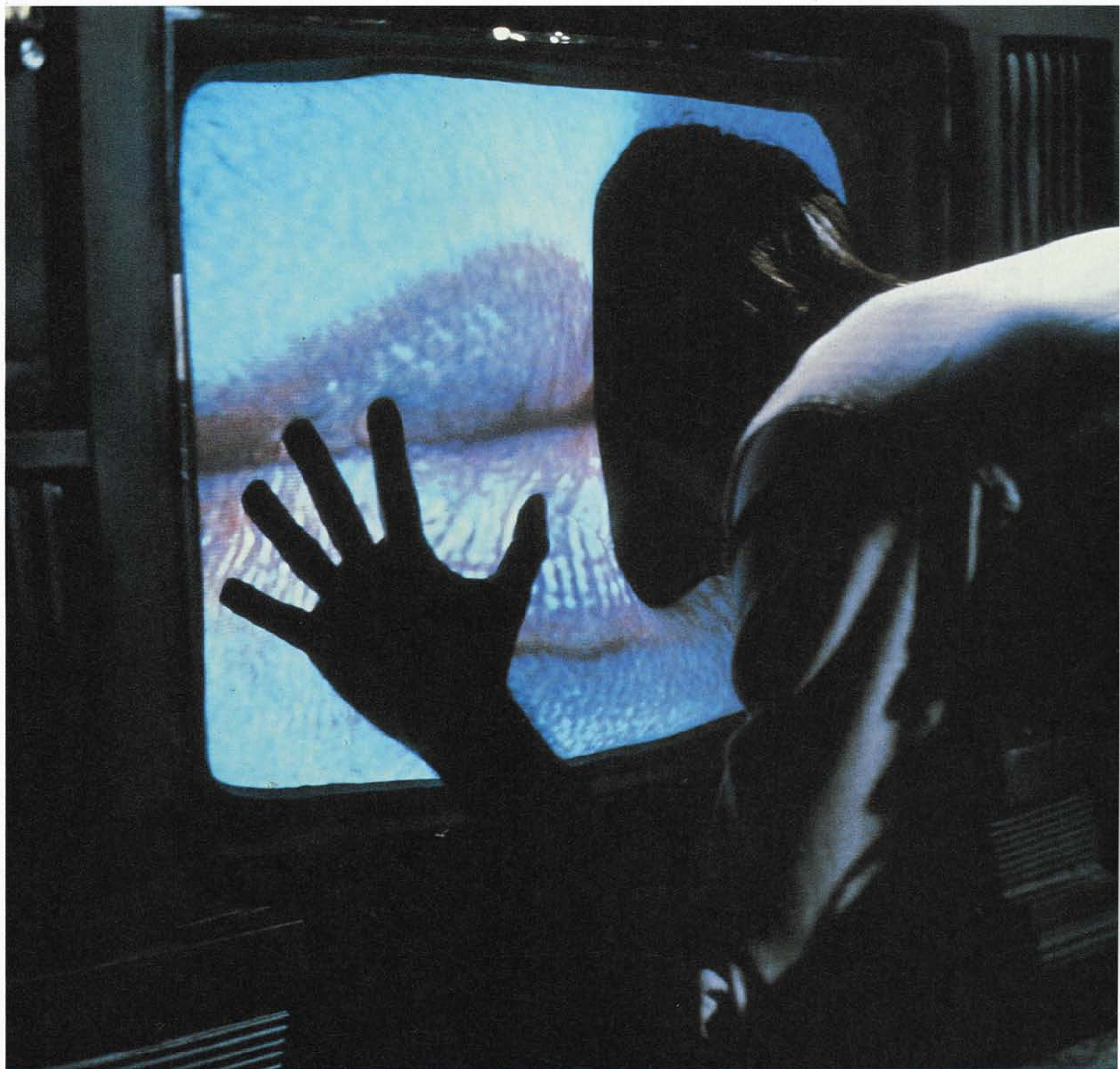
FEATURES: CUTTING-EDGE SOFTWARE, LOW STUDENT/EQUIPMENT RATIO, STATE-OF-THE-ART HARDWARE, UP TO 2,000 HOURS TRAINING.

CALL: (604) 685-5808

OR WRITE TO:

THE VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL
#400 - 1168 HAMILTON STREET
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA
CANADA V6B 2S2





MOVIE NIGHTMARES

Mobs and machines, utopias and dystopias, vile bodies and virtual realities – do screen dreams of the future still cause us sleepless nights? To tie in with Channel 4's 'Movie Nightmares' series, Sight and Sound examines some sci-fi futures and pasts



Hail the New Flesh (1):
James Woods embraces
the TV age in David
Cronenberg's 'Videodrome'

A VIRUS IS ONLY DOING ITS JOB

From the aliens outside to rebellion in the flesh: Linda Ruth Williams on body horror

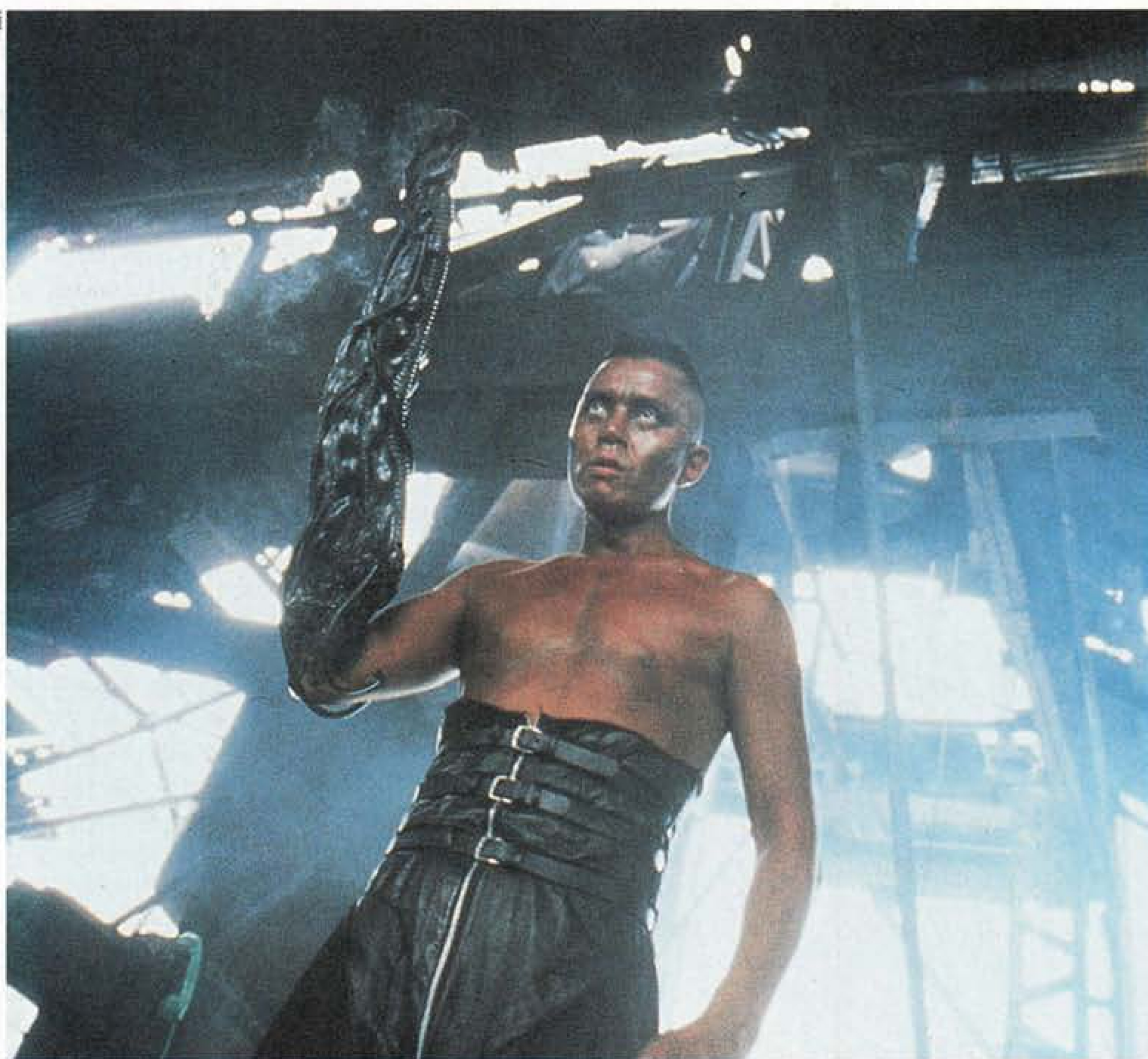
With all the visceral panache of a stylish horror director, Sylvia Plath tells the story of an accident in the kitchen. "What a thrill / My thumb instead of an onion," begins the poem 'Cut', in which her thumb, variously a scalped pilgrim and a bottle of fizzing pink champagne, becomes a battlefield of selves, a political arena with no clear allegiances:

"Out of a gap / A million soldiers run, / Red-coats, every one. / Whose side are they on?"

With a knife in her hand, she is her own worst enemy – the victim and the killer, on both sides of the violating divide, "Saboteur, Kamikaze man," the enemy within. The natural has become the most disturbing thing: blood and the fact of bleeding, the symptom of a hostile inhabitant. This is a poem of body horror.

The body never goes away. The ephemeral disturbances of the supernatural, the demonic or cybernetic immortality of monsters like Freddy or the Terminator who just keep coming back all have a power for horror. But it is our proximity to the body and its natural possibilities (its decay, its mutation, its potential for possession and inhabitation) which has gripped horror cinema most powerfully. That it has an agenda of its own, quite separate from the concerns of the conscious moral self, makes the natural more alien than the aliens. In this sense, human identity is an uneasy pact between the horrified self and its ever-mutating carcass. The natural body translated on to the horror screen is the paranoiac's dream come true: cut your thumb and the soldiers jump out – even your blood may not be your own. In the words of director David Cronenberg, "a virus is only doing its job." From a different perspective, stray into the territory of those who are too close to nature – the hillbillies of *The Hills Have Eyes* or *Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* (a film, as John McNaughton put it, "about people as meat") or encounter any number of cinematic cannibals, zombies or werewolves – and you become just another stop in the food chain.

There is a moment in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* when the eponymous hero, in his struggle to bring the naturally living body back together, "pursue[s] nature to her hiding-places in the charnel house and the vault." It is in corruption and degradation, when "the worm inherit[s] the wonders of the eye and the brain," that 'nature' is most manifest for Frankenstein. This is an image of nature quite distinct from that of mainstream Romanticism. Inverting the notion that the answer can be found in a natural idyll, Mary Shelley offers the Gothic possibility that the divide between life and death is not so clear: "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death." From this perspective, death is simply the body's ►



Hail the New Flesh (2): the marriage of steel and skin in 'Tetsuo II: Body Hammer'

◀ victory over spiritual integrity, as it mutates into a dazzling variety of life forms in decay. Death is only another form of natural life and degeneration is a matter of perspective. "To understand it from the disease's point of view, it's just a matter of life," says Cronenberg again. "I think most diseases would be very shocked to be considered diseases at all."

Which brings me to Nietzsche, the unsung philosopher of body horror who, celebrating "the tremendous multiplicity of events" within the body, argues that "we should study our organism in all its immortality." The fact that the conscious self finds certain states disturbing, and consequently organises the world in order to veil or repress the body's control and its gross changes, is for Nietzsche "an extravagance of vanity," a vanity through which it is able to deem itself consciously central. His is a world turned upside down in which "the animal functions are a million times more important than all our beautiful moods and heights of consciousness" – a motto not just for partakers in the carnival, but for grave robbers and horror directors too.

Cronenberg also sees from the body's point of view, asking "How does the disease perceive us?" The nightmare of the body is only a nightmare from the perspective of the other side. It is consequently not surprising that his 1974 film *Shivers* should be otherwise known as *They Came from Within*, its an echo of the Cold War titles which situated the threat or invader very tangibly 'over there' (*The Thing*, 1951; *It Came from Outer Space*, 1953). Where this horror strain, which also includes sci-fi crossover films like *Things to Come* (1936) or *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), explores the bad dream of

global control – loss of personal identity in a universal bid to swamp the liberal humanist individual – another looks to the microcosmic threat of bodily interiors: a terrorism, as it were, of the blood and the viscera.

Cronenberg's aliens are consistently bodily disturbing because of their proximity rather than their distance. His monsters aren't things which jump out of the closet; instead, the body is the closet from which the monster jumps. In this connection grubs and insects, the most familiar and most alien form of animate nature, have a special significance. The scale of those irradiated nightmare insects of Cold War fantasy has a vulgar power – the best example is probably the ants of *Them!* (1954), but a whole family of their mutant cinematic offspring testifies either to the heinous consequences of man tampering with the elements, or to his atomic or chemical machismo as they are obliterated in the final reel.

Enemies within

The examples are numerous and ludicrous: *Tarantula* (1955) and *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957) are self-evident, but the genre also embraces such gems as the giant caterpillar of *The Monster that Challenged the World* (1957), a 15-foot grasshopper in *Beginning of the End* (1956), *The Killer Shrews* (1959) and the mega-rabbits of *Night of the Lepus* (1972). This is an obsession which is continued in popular contemporary horror fiction by such writers as Guy N. Smith (*Crabs on the Rampage*) and Peter Tremayne (*Ants*). However, even the various insect-human hybrid movies (*The Fly*, 1958; *The Leech Woman*, 1960) have none of the impact that the idea of intimate inhabitation has – the notion of the

insect inside as a figure for a certain relationship with the self.

Shivers apparently began as a dream of a spider that lived in a woman's mouth (of which she was unconscious), coming out at night to crawl about the house before returning to the mouth at the end. Insects are interesting not just because of their utter commonness, but because of the way they can be made to inhabit us, standing as an image of the body's rebellion. The abject idea of some living thing under the surface struggling to get free, the possibility of the body opening itself to let it in or out again has been realised by Cronenberg in a number of ways, with the moving grubs in the bellies of *Shivers*, the vagina-opening in a male stomach in *Videodrome* (1982), the vampiric projectile in the armpit of the heroine of *Rabid* (1976).

This is also the dynamic of Shinya Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo* films (1989, 1992), although here the alien growths which protrude from within and eventually encompass the body host aren't even organic, as the hero Taniguchi's body sprouts not tumours but weapons, building itself a metal shell which both protects and connects it to the dark cartoon-Gothic landscape of arid skyscraper and scrapyard which he negotiates.

Nothing in Tsukamoto's landscape is natural except dreams, and yet unnatural as Taniguchi's experience is, the germ of mutation which eventually turns him into a tank behaves remarkably like a Cronenbergian disease. Metal is made to grow, gun barrels erect themselves in clusters from his chest, arms twist into metallic sinews which also fire – this inhabitation is mineral rather than animal. However, in *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer*, Taniguchi's eyes and teeth – the only part of his old self still visible at the close of the film – glisten amid his metal skin, suggesting that these features were just waiting to be placed in this new configuration of metal and firepower and that their old home in a human face was never quite right. Bodies do not necessarily end where or when they ought to end.

All these images are crystallisations of an anxiety at the heart of much horror: possession, not by a malign spirit, but by a readily reproducing organic will, for which you are just an incubator or food source (arguably the experience of many a pregnant woman, and *Rosemary's Baby* plays brilliantly on both senses of possession). The grandmother of all these must be *Alien*, a creature whose single-minded use for the human frame, combined with its strategic canniness, suggests a disturbing reversal of the order of things: we may be higher up the evolutionary scale, but the *Alien* can still make use of us, just as the shark in *Jaws* can still pitch itself higher up the food chain.

The phrase "they came from within" could then articulate a number of dark fears which develop the idea that something is rotten in the modern body politic. This might be the quietly multiplying viral enemy, tumour or alien, or it might even be the masochistic self which wants only what is bad for it – the buried self as fifth columnist. Nature has not only ceased to be an arcadian escape, a place to run to, but the body has mutated into the thing to run from,

which has serious consequences for the way we have preferred to perceive the 'inner self'. Not only has the natural world outside formed a conventional retreat, but one's 'inside' has traditionally constituted one's most authentic, final self. Horror can rewrite this, so that one's 'truest' inside is ever less controllable, subject to the visceral demands of buried organs, animated by an anti-human agenda. A scrap of matter that was Murphy in Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* (1987) retains his identity even after he has become "part man, part machine, all cop"; his flesh has a memory. If bodies do not necessarily end where or when they ought to end, neither do creative impulses. William Burroughs as writing machine is made flesh in the bug-typewriter of Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* (1992), in which the independently pulsating sex-monsters are also realisations of a lust which literally has a life of its own. In body horror, the relationship between inside and outside is (to paraphrase the critic Carol Clover) "less of a wall than a permeable membrane."

Death drives

If the twentieth century has given us antibiotics and contraception, it has also fantasised a darker kind of freedom for the body, through which it becomes a macabre realisation of the Romantic individualist. As Brundle-fly says in Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) – Brundle-fly being the marriage of Jeff Goldblum's character and the fly with which he is accidentally spliced – "I seem to be stricken by a disease with a purpose." In his short story 'The Body Politic', Clive Barker follows through this idea of corporeal rebellion, rewriting *Mad Love* (1935) and *The Hands of Orlac* (1924 and 1960) from the body's perspective. "Sedition... simmer[s] at [the hero's] wrists" as his hands plot to overthrow their imperialist overlord in an act of literal severance. For the traditional 'whole self', the possibility is monstrous, but Barker is adept at making us sympathise with the devil and with the 'natural' desire of the body to have its way: "And did his eyes envy their liberty, he wondered, and was his tongue eager to be out of his mouth and away, and was every part of him, in a subtle way, preparing to forsake him?... He waited, heart in mouth, for the fall of Empire."

Cronenberg's fascination with the implications of natural proximity and the centrality of the body is astonishingly seductive. Marginalised forms of creativity are pushed to a physi-

cal extreme, so that the Brundle-fly syndrome takes on a warped kind of power: "a creative cancer; something you would normally see as a disease goes to another level of creativity and starts sculpting with your own body." A curse becomes a gift if viewed in the right way; tumours are not only natural, they become brand new organs (in *Videodrome*, "a new outgrowth of the brain") capable of turning your fantasies into flesh – a kind of naturally generated virtual reality machine. It is clear that body horror is where Surrealism continues to thrive, alive and kicking in its subversion of reason and taste. Disease becomes an agent and realisation of polymorphously perverse desire, and here again the shift in the perception of Barker's work from horror to fantasy is relevant, the monstrous of *Hellraiser* (1985) becoming the imaginatively mutant of *Nightbreed* (1990). Barker's characters might struggle with the insurrection of the body, but this is the same body which can offer a new range of experiences or a pleasurable lack of control.

When infected by the venereal parasite in *Shivers*, a woman argues that "disease is the love of two alien kinds of creatures for each other – even dying is an act of eroticism." From Frankenstein's death-as-life, we come to death as the profoundest form of organic attraction, an idea way beyond the Freudian notion of the death drive as the desire to return to the inorganic; in body horror, death is only part of the continuing process of mutation. The question remains, however, of how these ideas can be addressed positively: even the wildest celebrants of unconscious insurrection would be hard pressed to keep to the margins when confronted with the moral gloss on otherness preferred by mainstream horror. Even a film such as *The Wicker Man*, which pits the repressed policeman (not a natural hero) against the far more interesting Dionysian nature cultists, forces some kind of sympathy with "right-mindedness" in the final scene. Who, then, are we encouraged to identify with – the struggling moral subject or the frenzied subject of excess?

Yet the very fact that this question can be posed suggests that body horror need not be horrible, that these natural forms may not necessarily be the components of a nightmare – it all depends on who is doing the dreaming. Fear the wolf who is hairy on the inside, charges the grandmother in Neil Jordan's film version of Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves*, but she gets eaten for her fear. Carter's heroines prefer to embrace the natural threat, and in her short story 'The Tiger's Bride' (a neat reversal of the 'Beauty and the Beast' myth), it is Beauty who changes. The Tiger may be the only one to make her feel like a natural woman, but what she finds is not that her beastly self is more authentic because more natural, but that the natural is just another masquerading set of underclothes, which she can choose to prefer: "And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur."

MACHINE DREAMS

From strange gods to cyberspace: Elizabeth Young on the shock of the new

Marooned here in hyper-reality, in a depthless televisual present, we could all do with a user's guide. Which future have you picked out for yourself? Are you a child of Moloch or of Gaia? Do you see yourself in the next century with dermatrodes strapped to your forehead, your brain cells streaming across the cyperspatial network in a shimmering nimbus of neurons and electrons while your body pulses with the virtual sexual ecstasies of teledildonics? Do you live in a world of implants, nerve-splicing and microbionics, a world divided forever into hardware, software and wetware? Or alternatively, are you an apocalypso dancer, wringing your hands, crying doom, voting Green? If so, your future vision is one of poisoned oceans thick as tar, of skin cancer, of a scorched earth on which mutated, skeletal humans battle with cockroaches and rats for sustenance.

This basic opposition between two ways of seeing the industrial technocracy stretches back into the last century and even further. The Romantic landscape painters Turner, Cotman and John Martin presented the iron foundry as the gaping maw of the pagan underworld. Similarly, in our own century, writers have turned to strange gods in their frustration at what seemed an intolerable present and an impenetrable future. T. S. Eliot, in *The Waste Land* – his great dirge to the Romantic and classical worlds we have lost – summons the Sibyl at Cumae and the hermaphrodite seer Tiresias as he surveys the spiritual pollution of the twentieth century. And other writers too, from D. H. Lawrence to William Burroughs, have invoked ancient civilisations – the Mayans, the Aztecs, the Egyptians – to provide the wisdom that might give us the strength to be able to bear the new world.

When in 1955 Allen Ginsberg hurled the imprecations of *Howl* into the turgid nuclear lethality of post-war America, one of his targets was corporate industry: "Moloch, whose mind is pure machinery!" Ginsberg was here using the imagery of the monstrous machine-god from Fritz Lang's futuristic 1926 film *Metropolis*. In the film, Moloch is the embodiment of the nightmare factories which devour the labour of the slave-workers. In attempting to express an inexpressible horror, Lang had reached far back to the seventh century BC, alluding to the cruel Phoenician deity to whom live children were sacrificed in flames.

Ginsberg and all the legions of hippie pastoralists who pitched their tepees in the paths of fighter jets were themselves throwbacks to those who had eyed the modern world with such distress a century earlier. The Pre-Raphaelite painters, drooping around in quasi-medieval dress, were part of the same tradition, as were William Morris and other members of the Arts and Crafts movement, with their simple-minded veneration for the ►



Revolting bodies: 'The Fly'



The Sheriff of Silicon Gulch: Yul Brynner in 'Westworld'

◀ nobility of peasants and artisans. Augustus John, swinging his gypsy cloak, speaking Romany and dragging his wretched children around the countryside in caravans, was a turn-of-the-century forerunner of the English haute-hippie culture of the 60s.

Professor John Carey in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* has pointed out the ways in which a deep and snobbish distrust of urbanisation and an increasingly media-dominated world was embedded within the writings of the English Modernists. Evelyn Waugh, Eliot, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster and Lawrence all tended to see the urban and suburban sprawl of the modern world as mechanical and soulless. And in *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley chose to extol the virtues of the Savage, noble as Nietzsche intended and fully attuned to the primal and the sublime.

Many such writers struggled with left-wing sympathies while harbouring a contradictory detestation of the masses, whom they saw as symbolic of all that was deathly and meaningless in the age of consumer capitalism. For example, the Bloomsbury group and their associates were agreed on a curious hatred of tinned food – tins, often of salmon (so pink, so vulgar), appear regularly and incongruously in

their work as an example of all that they feel is enfeebled and second-rate about modern civilisation. Even George Orwell fulminates ominously against it: "We may find in the long run that tinned food is a deadlier weapon than the machine gun."

It was not until Andy Warhol threw a tin of Campbell's soup in the public's face in 1962, announcing that he himself wanted to be a machine, that a more complex engagement with what was by now post-modernism began. Warhol also noted that he had observed nothing more anachronistic than women giving birth. The hatcheries envisaged by Huxley were on their way.

All along, however, other writers and artists had regarded the modern world less pessimistically. Rudyard Kipling mocks the upper-class "loon" who asks, "Don't you think steam spoils romance at sea?" Such writers still feared the future, of course – Arthur Conan Doyle expresses all the terror of flight experienced in its early days in his story 'The Horror of the Heights', in which a pilot finds the upper stratosphere to be full of predatory jellyfish. Such fears find an odd echo in Tom Wolfe's description of the period immediately before Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier: "Evil

and baffling things happened in the transonic zone" (*The Right Stuff*).

H. G. Wells too felt ambivalent about the future, but when his spacemen were not being menaced by salivating octopoid crabs, he was prepared to admit the possibility of superior, intelligent races such as the Selenites in *The First Men In The Moon*. Wells could be astonishingly prescient. When *The Sleeper Wakes* was written in 1899 and set in a twenty-second-century London that has become a "gigantic glass hive" (or mall perhaps) housing a population of 33 million. There are no more books, only videos or pornography labelled in phonetic English. This vision has obvious affinities with the huge Sprawl imagined by 1980s science-fiction writer William Gibson – a multi-cultural megapolis where every form of erotic nanotechnology and pleasure-pulse implant is for sale.

Unimaginable complexity

The visual arts often appeared more open to change. Italian Futurism, founded in the 1910s, called for the life of "steel, fever, pride and headlong speed" to be represented in painting. But the Futurists were inevitably overtaken by the cinematograph in their attempts to convey action on static canvas. From the start, the cinema's relationship to the industrial world was different to that of the other arts. Cinema was ineluctably bonded to this world in terms of technology, and being of necessity populist, it was not alienated from ordinary people. It became first inescapable, then central, and finally dominant. Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936) makes the traditional liberal case against factory exploitation and automatism, but unlike the academic intelligentsia, he is unable to object to the mass media.

Thus cinema, representative of the best and worst of the media world, evolved into the primary art of the century. During the 50s Hollywood found its own highly profitable ways of dealing with the future. Fears about radiation and the bomb were expressed in countless films – *The Beast from Twenty Thousand Fathoms* (1953), originally activated by nuclear tests, is killed when Lee Van Cleef fires a radioactive isotope. Radiation is responsible for *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957), for *The Incredible Shrinking Man* in the same year, even for a radioactive Mickey Rooney in *The Atomic Kid* (1954). Space is explored, notably in the Shakespearean *Forbidden Planet* (1965), and worries about extra-terrestrial seed pods – or communists, to all intents and purposes one and the same thing – are dealt with in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). The influence spread – Quatermass, *Star Trek* and Doctor Who crept into our dreams.

The seismic cultural spasm of the 60s and 70s can be seen as the birth pangs of a new futuristic technocracy. Logistic authoritarianism was disrupted to make way for new, more fluid and visual ways of apprehending a world of multiple realities. Consumer-driven capitalism accelerated into a Disneyfication of society, a media onslaught which the Parisian Situationists called the "spectacle" and which Baudrillard was later to term the "simulacrum". Film-makers, glazed from psychedelics, carried on trying to deal with the future – trying to

think in 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968), trying to prophesy in *Westworld* (1973) and trying to dream in *Barbarella* (1967).

During the 70s and 80s a certain homogeneity of vision began to emerge. The Alien might still be out there, but surely more reassuring *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) were just as probable? Most notable was the similarity between Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and William Gibson's visionary, lyrical *Neuromancer* trilogy of novels. The works reflect the same world – each city a futuristic megalopolis, dangerous, endless, heavily oriental, with quartz halogen floods lighting up the dark rain, towering hologram logos and the “poisoned silver sky”. Here, as Gibson says, “Power... meant corporate power... the multinationals that shaped the course of human history.” Moloch has won. We are inheriting the rainbow flux of cyberspace – the virtual arena for electronic communication, described by Gibson as “a consensual hallucination... data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unimaginable complexity” – and along with it, meta-viruses, smart TV, designer drugs, constant synchronicity and books that live on CD-ROM and are marketed as “content-based software”.

No one who has denounced technocracy has ever wished to return to cold water, disease and outdoor lavatories; but in one respect the Modernists were right – as Orwell put it, “The dustbin we are in reaches up to the stratosphere.” We are overpopulated. In *Soylent Green* (1973), an old man goes to the Euthanasia Centre and before dying is shown a film of the world we have lost. We see the sunsets, sea-foam and spin-drift, salmon spawning in pellucid waters and deer running forever across the dawn – and of course by now it's too late to cry. We have now to thrust nature back at Wordsworth, to distort his meaning and “see with eye serene / The very pulse of the machine.”

William Gibson

“The electric engine was once a powerful and startling marvel. If you happened to possess one and the battery to run it on, it would be quite something and you would take very good care of it. Today we all own innumerable electric engines. We don't know where they are, we don't know what they are doing. I think most people would be very hard pressed to say exactly how many electric engines they have in their home and automobile. It's virtually impossible, you just don't know. We never think about them, they are all around us, they are operating constantly and they are just part of the background. I think that computation will go that way, so the computers will become small and transparent and finally invisible and sort of spread out through everything. And everything will be interconnected and we simply won't be aware of it.”

THE MOB

Power elites or the common rabble? Philip Strick listens to the roar of the crowd



Frightened people: 'It Came from Outer Space'

First published 50 years ago in *Weird Tales*, Ray Bradbury's 'The Crowd' is among the earliest of his short stories. Anthologised in 1947, it has never been out of print since. Prompted by an acute phobia of traffic – for years, Bradbury refused to drive a car or travel by plane – it noted the speed with which spectators gather at the site of a road accident and suggested they might always be the same people, with a specific evaluative function. If you were lucky, they let you live. If your time was up, they shifted you about a bit and you died. You then became one of them.

Fascinating for its several undercurrents of anxiety, the story is basic Bradbury in its concern with the peculiar magnetism of collective behaviour. He wrote repeatedly about the attractions and disadvantages of being an outsider, self-exiled (as writers tend to be) from the restrictive 'normality' of the community. For Bradbury, crowds were small collections of relatives who laid claim to you, people you grew to depend on and were part of. Given the chance, they swallowed you up and you didn't have to be independent any more. To belong or not to belong: these are the polarities of science fiction. Bradbury identified them more by instinct than design, whereas H. G. Wells before him, in his resonant novels of recruitment and exclusion, had explored them at length.

In the genre as a whole these polarities can be seen everywhere: as the guiding forces for Isaac Asimov's parables of robotic integration, for Robert Heinlein's tracts of benevolent dictatorship, or for Kurt Vonnegut's lugubrious comedies of disaffection. And the cinema, also with more instinct than forethought, has repeated the same evolutionary contest: an ambivalent agenda of popular heroism in which the individual, whether alien or home-grown, is pitted against a neighbourhood, a town, a nation or an entire planet. In as crowd-pleasing a manner as possible, he or she shapes, deflects, survives, or is martyred by a massive adversary, or is placed in limbo for some future retrieval – Quatermass vs Whitehall, Lemmy Caution vs Paris, or Winston Smith vs the rats.

The question echoes at the end of *Things to Come* (1936) as the summation of a Wellsian

chronicle of deaths foretold: “Which shall it be?” The choice here is between the foolhardy enterprise of a young couple speeding round the moon with no great certainty of purpose or return, and the assembled outrage of Everytown's new citizens, claiming through Cedric Hardwicke, in one of his dafter roles, to have had enough of progress. On the evidence, contrary to the contemptuous Raymond Massey, the protestors have the better case: *Things to Come*, a triptych of mass observation, covers a not unfamiliar century – as much nineteenth as twentieth – of warfare, plague and reconstruction, after which a pause for recuperation seems reasonable. One of the cinema's great manifestos of collective suffering, the film views a limited range of leaders (mostly war lords) with some disquiet against a background, for two-thirds of its length, of casual exploitation and slaughter. Even when the wars are over, the population of the brave new world is allowed scant dignity; indolent among the balconied monoliths, its eagerness to sabotage the space-gun without a second thought for the democratic process indicates the continuing fragility, injustice and innate stupidity of Everytown's social structure. This is a circus where only the ringleaders have fun.

The weakness of William Cameron Menzies' staging of the final scenes, the decor uneasily merging with a multitude in robes and cloaks who look like refugees from *The Last Days of Pompeii*, is that the fakery takes over and the riot becomes nothing more menacing than a column of wobbling figures on model roadways. Ten years previously, Fritz Lang showed what could be done with riots in the cinema's other conjectural monument, *Metropolis*, equally confusing in text but with the strikingly different visual sense of the silent era. Where Menzies' designs were already the clichés of the early pulp magazines, Lang's dynamic patterns of light and movement offered a nightmarish collision between Expressionism and Futurism. His portrait of the sky-probing city at disastrous odds with its own foundations is both a melodrama of parental miscalculation and an unresolved battle (we may surely disregard the trite reconciliation) between the ranks of the arbitrarily privileged and of the doggedly industrious. Marching his copious troops of extras in weary or ardent columns and hurling them at each other like tidal waves, Lang even shapes them into occasional pyramids of clutching hands, a girl (or robot) at their apex, in a vehement geometry.

This kind of orchestration was to find a natural home in the historical epic or Western (see *The Last of the Mohicans* on both counts) but has been ignored in later predictive cinema, where mob rule is habitually staged with a chaotic realism. Probably the best-known image of outraged townsfolk is the publicity shot from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), with Dana Wynter and Kevin McCarthy only a short distance ahead of the pack. Sadly, the shot doesn't appear in the film itself, where they manage a clearer getaway; a more ominous sequence in Don Siegel's design is the simple long-shot of pods being issued in the town centre. A circle of ordinary figures closes in and scatters once ►



Crowd containment: 'Metropolis'

◀ again, a controlled explosion of menace. For the pursuit scene, Siegel jostles his hunters up a hillside on a narrow stairway, partly to make them look more numerous, partly to slow them down (so that their prey has time to find a hiding place), and partly to convey a kind of plodding determination, the more sinister for its refusal to be deflected.

In Philip Kaufman's 1978 remake, McCarthy is a traffic victim, his body studied by impassive pedestrians in homage to both Siegel and Bradbury. It was Bradbury's story for *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), along with Menzies' attractively distorted *Invaders from Mars* of the same year, that set the tone for 'pod' dramas, fearful of un-human conformism such as might be found in broad daylight among police, politicians and parents. Kaufman shifts the emphasis to the night, when sleep unleashes the powers of the pods; his version of Siegel's chase is a bedlam of headlights and silhouettes, a lynch party of the shadows. But night or day, there is never any question among the book-burners of *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), the alien-possessed community of *Night Slaves* (1970), the vampirical neighbours of *The Omega Man* (1971), the conspiratorial husbands of *The Stepford Wives* (1974), or the underground patriots of *A Boy and His Dog* (1974), that their cause is fair, inevitable and – if necessary – lethal.

The point of *It Came from Outer Space*, in fact, is that the visitors, forced by accident to intrude, are intent not on takeover but on hasty departure before an army of interfering Californians can uncover and destroy them. "You frighten people" is the accusation levelled against the aliens, who in their natural state are so repellent that even Richard Carlson, their terrestrial champion, has to avert his gaze – "and what frightens them, they're against." It is the same revulsion that brings a regular turbulence of villagers to Frankenstein's door, self-appointed executioners whose authority derives from their sheer number.

Along with its role as tribunal, the celluloid crowd embodies a form of elitism – hence the trials of strength in survivalist contexts such as

Zardoz (1973), the *Mad Max* trilogy (1979-85), *Red Dawn* (1984) and *Slipstream* (1989). While the world at large is seen as a fertile source of victims, trodden underfoot in the monster films of the 50s, eradicated by *Earthquake* (1974) or *Meteor* (1979), and continually engulfed by nuclear disaster, most recently in *Miracle Mile* (1989), the persistence of smaller communities also seems assured. It is intriguing to note the rivalry between factions in, for instance, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), where the privilege of a meeting with a supposed higher intelligence is secured first by the evacuation of all ordinary citizens and second by the restriction of the armed forces, so that only the planet's new elite, the scientists, are quietly prominent at first contact. Light years away, the adoption of *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) by his local townsfolk is the result of a fashionable phase in which the outcast would be somebody who has not found a use for the newcomer's skills – until the pale youth falls from favour and the town closes its ranks against him once more. Most stimulating of such tales is Brian Yuzna's *Society* (1989), where the ultimate 'in crowd' regularly immerses itself in a common pool of liquid flesh, exuberantly shared and reshaped, from which a troubled adolescent regarded as unworthy of the ritual is tauntingly excluded.

Consensual cruelty

It is as consumer and despoiler, of course, that the crowd has come to dominate. While films about overpopulation have been scarce and implausible – *Soylent Green* (1973) managed some heaped staircases and an ill-staged riot, but its message was something to do with fine cuisine – the awareness of a decaying environment has steadily grown more acute. With George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) the world predicament was starkly drawn: the poison of self-destruction has made zombies of us all. The spectacle of corpses on the prowl finds a ready audience, fascinated at the legitimacy of blowing away the neighbours and by the intricate detail of dismemberment. As was promptly noted about Romero's sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) in which, anticipating today's standard diet of urban guerrilla movies, the disadvantaged hordes hit a supermarket, the horrific catalogue of assaults and disfigurements is a scarcely disguised portrait of normal behaviour by high-street shoppers. In the same vein, Graham Baker's small-town community of *Impulse* (1984), gradually destabilised by a nearby toxic leak, watches unconcernedly as their sheriff goes haywire with a machine gun.

That we should blame ourselves for the deterioration seems perversely part of its attraction. The television audience, which might cynically be regarded as the ultimate in living dead, has repeatedly been unmasked in science-fiction films as gullible and cannibalistic, but at the same time with the vital deciding vote where serious money is concerned. In the Paddy Chayevsky/Sidney Lumet fable *Network* (1976), a deranged prophet tops the ratings by encouraging his audience to yell in inarticulate defiance from its windows. His producer is despairingly warned by her departing lover: "Everything that you and television touch is

destroyed. You're television incarnate: indifferent to suffering, insensitive to joy. All of life is reduced to the common rubble of banality – war, murder, death, are all the same to you as bottles of beer." The accusation underlies a succession of 'public entertainment' predictions, from *The Tenth Victim* (1965) – based on Robert Sheckley's short story about the sport of murder – and continuing through *Rollerball* (1975), *Death Watch* (1979) and *The Prize of Peril* (1983) to *The Running Man* (1987). These accounts of consensual cruelty reveal the crowd largely by its absence: the mass audience is not on the screen but in front of it.

While no innocent, the viewer as victim remains a constant. Where *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) was an essay in solitude, *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (1981), an appropriately vulgar update, was a comedy of consumerism in which the dwindling housewife, poisoned by a superfluity of noxious new products, achieves television stardom. The appetite for television fuels the super-joke in *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1983): a scheme for the nation's children to be slaughtered when a transmission triggers their Halloween masks. And it is through television that the villains of *Superman II* (1980) and *Batman* (1989) – where the Joker also makes free use of toxic chemicals – manipulate the weak-willed citizens of the new Metropolis and the weary Gotham City. A more sympathetic view of the beleaguered urbanite is offered by the Wim Wenders/Peter Handke meditation *Wings of Desire* (1987), in which each citizen is seen to be unknowingly attended by his or her own guardian angel, a conciliatory if ineffectual throng. "The Germans are divided into as many states as there are individuals," observes the screenplay. And in these pensive figures, poised on the brink of another level of existence, the crowd is accordingly reduced to its essential components, fragile travellers waiting for an accident to happen.

Kurt Vonnegut

“The purpose of a factory is to provide work for the people in the neighbourhood. The new machines always coming in destroy that function. At the moment I'm writing about an industrial community in Rhode Island. There used to be many textile factories up there, great big things making sheets and pillowcases for the whole damn world. Those are ghost towns now. They say: how logical to build a wonderful granite structure with floors that can bear any sort of weight, that lasts for a thousand years. And of course the people in the neighbourhood will go there five or six days a week and make sheets and pillowcases for everybody else, so that everybody's taken care of. And then I remember that machines have made all this unnecessary, have thrown people out of work, have destroyed half the function of a factory.”

TROUBLE AHEAD

Michael Moorcock lambasts male banalities and issues a storm warning for 2001

The worst of the nightmare has to be over. I refuse to anticipate anything more terrible for the next century than a repeat of our own.

In 1893, when H.G. Wells published the speculative essays which became *The Time Machine*, all the journals of the day were running stories and features on the coming century. While many predicted an antiseptic utopia, others anticipated atomic bombs (*Angel of the Revolution*, 1893), aerial battles, appalling tyrannies and crazed autocracies, genocide, an earth drowning in her own waste and world wars reducing the human race to brutes. They also predicted cinemas, cheap air travel, spaceflight, television and the welfare state. What came true, in one form or another, was pretty much everything that the human mind of that time could imagine.

I've always had difficulty in determining where the dream turns into the nightmare. My own characters, like Jerry Cornelius, are often at their most fulfilled when swimming in violent social rapids, and I can't help celebrating the extraordinary intellectual and artistic achievement which has been going on, side by side with the horror, for over 100 years. Our ambiguous relationships with atomic energy and the computer (both of which, in their different ways, offer us a potential heaven or hell) are good examples of this duality. I have always felt optimistic about both, while believing that both carry the potential for doing us serious physical and psychic damage.

My chief concern is that at present we have no sophisticated ethic with which to deal with the profound changes we experience in our daily and political lives. (It's probably only a few diehard loonies who believe our modern problems can be solved, rather than further complicated, by simplistic old-fashioned remedies – and unfortunately for Britain, most of these seem to be in the present government.) I place a lot of faith in the techniques of virtual reality to help us to come up with more flexible methods of handling our problems, and enjoy the speculations of the cyberpunks and young science-fiction writers who have seized on VR as a perfect means of exploring the interface between dream and nightmare. But my main hope is that human beings, aided by new technology and scientific theory, will develop a system of ethics and morals on which we can base any future democracy, future business practices and future social programmes. We must examine every detail of our present systems, down to fundamental assumptions about ourselves and our society. Perhaps this can best be done through the mass visual arts.

I believe that just as we used this century to act out the dreams and nightmares of the last, so we must use the coming one to find ways of ensuring that the same things can't easily happen again. Importantly, we need to use what

means we can to tackle the terrible consequences of our economic reliance on the sale of weapons, which helps to perpetuate the primitive blood-feuding that has manifested itself in almost every part of the world at some time in the last few decades, whether Britain, the US, Bosnia or Cambodia. We must examine the roots of our tribalism and if nothing else start to think of ourselves as one big tribe with big issues to talk about.

Between the publication of *The Time Machine* and the filming of his script for *Things to Come* some 40 years later, Wells kept alive his dream of world peace. His proposed methods, which failed so dramatically and thoroughly (in my view, paternalism is the worm at the core of all those apples), nevertheless reflected an idealism which was eventually realised in terms of practical social improvement. As an incurable optimist who by sheer chance has predicted some of the worst of our recent nightmares, including the destruction of Dubrovnik, I cannot accept that we will make of the next century the terrible nightmare we have made of the present one.

I have difficulty with violence. I'm frequently told that the 'realistic' violence I'm offered will make me hate the whole idea of it, but this supposed logic never makes sense. I've experienced a fair amount of local violence in my time, from V-bombs, Teddy Boys and the Notting Hill police riots to IRA bombs, muggers and the primitive hatred of Iranian client groups against Salman Rushdie, as well as international violence. I'm not nervous of it, but I don't need anyone to convince me that it's a bad thing and that the world has its share of psychotic sadists and mass murderers. The Nazi years offered a clue or two to that effect.

I still find off-screen violence or the threat of it (*Night of the Hunter*, *Kiss Me Deadly*) more effective than any amount of blood capsules and exploding clothing. I think the cinema is

dreadfully male-dominated (the chief reason I've done so little film work) and most of the nonsense justifying violence seems no more than a rationalisation for another bit of nasty fifth-form fantasising, as convincing as the bullshit we used to get about self-indulgent, amateurish, maudlin hippie movies being 'anti-war'. Who really believes that it's good to be shot at, mutilated, gassed or raped, or that the experience is enlightening? Who is this dialogue supposed to be with?

Male banalities have become respectable themes in so much cinema. The button seems badly stuck on repeat, which looks grim for Century MM. For me, the nightmare reduces to a self-destructive orgy of male-bonding for which the media, much of it cinema and television, must take some responsibility.

A comic book, faithful to a novel of mine, was recently voted by a powerful moral watchdog outfit to be the second most vicious comic on sale in the US (a Japanese splatter comic was top of the list). And I have vigorously defended, in court, publications which are far more stomach-turning than anything I've seen on screen. I've told violent stories about violent people pretty much all my working life, so I'm not about to fall in behind Mrs Whitehouse's somewhat faded banner. However, I am unhappy about the vast number of third-rate boys' movies that get funded in favour of the alternatives we all know exist.

As long as that situation continues, we will probably never be able to escape the nightmare spiral of macho blood-feuding and sadism which characterises contemporary history and is reflected in, perhaps perpetuated by, those braggingly expensive, relentlessly vacuous, thoroughly dull movies. Such films might well have discovered a common denominator for commercial success, but must take their share of the blame when the planet is engulfed by the cold and brutal banality of hell.



Antiseptic utopia: 'Things to Come'

THE TRAPPINGS OF DISASTER

Kevin Jackson mourns the potency and passion of sci-fi's bygone dystopias

We used to have recurring nightmares. They took the shape of dark premonitions: glimpses of imminent or distant futures where the skies and seas would be poisoned and the land laid waste, where human or electronic dictators would hold cruel and absolute sway, where there would always be too many mouths and not enough food. But then the nightmares began to change.

They changed, let's say, some time around the late 70s, when science fiction moved from the commercial margins of cinema into its mainstream, although the earliest mutations were so slight that few of us really noticed. Little by little, though, our glimpses of things to come grew if not quite cosy, then at least more tame. For one thing, and long before the Cold War finally receded into history, our films stopped fretting much about totalitarianism, the loss of individuality and suchlike. George Lucas, who with *Star Wars* (1977) did more than any other film-maker to bring about the genre's *nouveau riche* status, made one of the last full-blooded exercises in the old Forster/Huxley/Orwell dystopian mode with *THX 1138* in 1971; and since then?

Michael Radford's *1984* (1984) managed to escape the general blight by its clever acknowledgment of how much of Orwell's book now speaks of our past rather than of our future. And certainly shards of the old liberal anxieties can be found in films from *Blade Runner* to *The Running Man* by those willing to look closely enough. Elsewhere, though, political dystopias evidently lost their power to chill: if Schlöndorff's film of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1989) failed to capture the mass imagination, the misfire was probably due not so much to some artistic failing in the film as to an inescapable weariness in the genre. One of the worst gaffes a science-fiction film can make is to look old-fashioned by accident rather than design, and while the feminist burden of *The Handmaid's Tale* may have been red-hot, its for-

mat was stale – it could as well have been adapted, say, from one of Robert Heinlein's 'Future Histories' or from Fritz Leiber's enjoyable theocratic horror story *Gather, Darkness*. If over-familiarity with Cassandra's voice had not quite bred contempt, it had clearly fostered indifference.

As for those other typical dystopias – the barren post-nuclear landscapes or teeming cityscapes, the technological updates on the ancient human terrors of plague, famine and war – a first glance at films of the late 70s/early 80s might suggest that these were not merely unchanged, but more eerily seductive than ever: in George Miller's *Mad Max* series, in Altman's *Quintet*, in John Carpenter's *Escape From New York*, and in *Blade Runner* with its clones and epigones. Beneath the surface, however, the changes have been marked, and the principal one can be expressed in a few simple formulae: subject matter became decor, centre stage moved to backstage, theme became pretext. In other words, where the main attraction of futuristic nightmare movies used to be the predicted disaster itself – as Susan Sontag pointed out in 1965, the peculiar joy of science-fiction films up to then was always to do with "the aesthetics of destruction... the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc, making a mess" – the newer dystopias simply took on the trappings of disaster and assimilated them to other purposes, other genres. To one genre in particular, in fact.

It matters less that *The Running Man* (1987) is a sci-fi satire about the media than that it's an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, less that *Total Recall* (1989) is set on Mars than that it stars Arnie, less that the *Terminator* films are about a future war between humankind and machines than that... This almost total absorption of one form by another may sound like a narrowing, a decline – even, perhaps, a kind of body-snatching – and in some ways it is. One of its neatest emblems is the career of Geoff Murphy, who progressed (or more justly, retrogressed) from the inventiveness of his last-man-alive fantasy *The Quiet Earth* in 1985 to the derivative tedium of *Freejack* (1992). The thrill of these lavish Hobbesian spectacles was no longer in their power to scare and warn, but in their chases, fights and explosions, for which the future merely provided an exotic location.

It does not take a brilliant mad scientist like Rotwang from *Metropolis* to guess why this shift

of attention should have taken place. In the late 50s and early 60s, the more unimaginative type of pundit used to trot out the line about science fiction having been rendered obsolete by such astounding new technology as the sputnik and the hovercraft. Steven Spielberg seems not to have been unduly dismayed by such wisdom. Even so, the real-life penetration of our daily lives by harbingers of the future has evidently dulled our taste for mere prediction, whether frightening or utopian. Environmentally alarmist films such as *Soylent Green* (1973) have become an endangered species precisely because ecological ruin is already with us, and phrases like 'global warming' have lost any futuristic resonance.

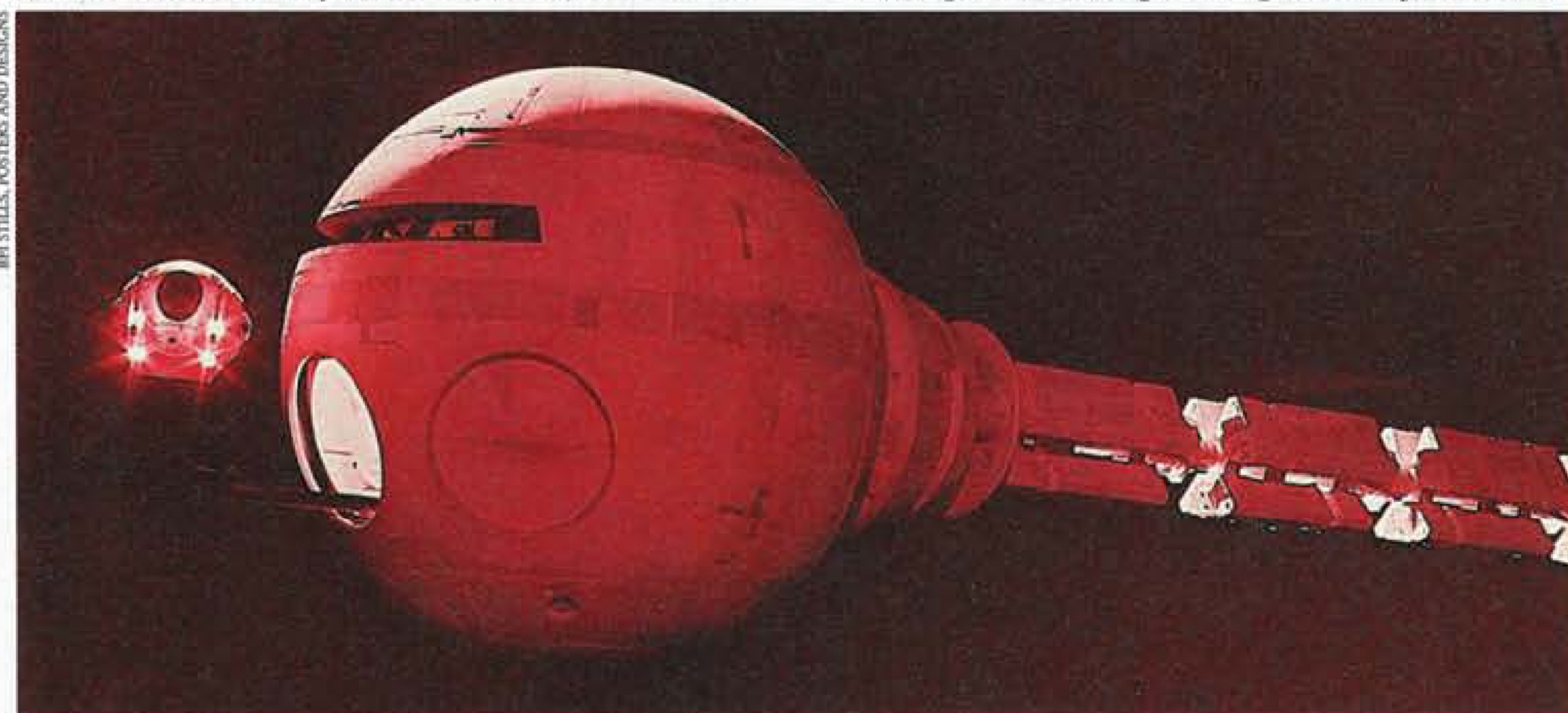
Nor can the hardware of robots, rockets and ray guns help prop up a limping film in the way it could in the B movies: when it takes only a few years for a marvel to become a banality, only rubes are likely to be much impressed by a teleporter or an anti-grav unit. (It's charming to recall that David Bowie, trying to dress up his spacey song 'Drive-In Saturday' with suitably alienated, high-tech trappings, came up with the idea of lovers watching – O brave new world! – "video films".) Nor, after barely a decade of using them as handy household appliances, is it as easy to become too terrified at the prospect of neurotic computers like HAL 9000 from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

FX fatigue

Sadly, this law of diminishing enchantment applies not only to the advanced technology within films, but to the accelerating technology of films. When *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day* (1991) opened, the hypothetical gadgets which allowed the new-series Terminator to flow mercurially into any shape seemed scarcely more astounding than the real-life gadgets of Industrial Light and Magic which supplied the illusion. For a few months we could all be like children again; like the early audiences who had delighted in Meliès' jump-cuts, or in the dissolves in *Metropolis* which brought the robot to life. Already, though, after a few rock videos and advertisements have plagiarised this protean trick, the magic is beginning, ever so slightly, to pall. The ingenuity of special effects departments will have to be sorely taxed lest we become jaded once more.

It may be, of course, that *T2* represents the pinnacle of what special effects departments can provide – as long, that is, as movies remain a two-dimensional, two-sense medium of sight and sound; giant holograms, Huxleyan 'feelies' and so on are another matter. Until these show up, James Cameron's film can provide us with a timely reminder. Thrilling as it may be, this science-fiction film that can apparently do anything is a reminder of how little science-fiction films have actually been doing in the last two decades.

One of the most exhilarating aspects of science-fiction novels and short stories is their capacity to render startlingly abstruse speculation – not just scientific, but ethical, philosophical and even religious – into forms which remain tenaciously popular. True, the cinema of science fiction has traditionally offered



Utopian retro: Kubrick's '2001: A Space Odyssey'



Mercurial magic: 'Terminator 2'

coarser gratifications, yet the split between the page and the screen has seldom been wider than in the years since the Force was first With Us. Linguistics, anthropology, chaos theory, genetics, microbiology, theology... these have been on the syllabus not just of colleges but of the best new sci-fi novelists, such as Ian Watson, Greg Bear, Suzette Haden Elgin and others (Brian Aldiss gives an authoritative survey in the final chapters of his excellent study *Trillion Year Spree*, 1986). Science-fiction films, meanwhile, have tended to offer us heavy-metal hoodlums on Harleys. We have seen the future, and it wears black leather.

This may be an overstatement, but it's scarcely a caricature. The majority of the few venturesome science-fiction films of the past few years have been relegated to the art houses – Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972), Peter Wollen's *Friendship's Death* (1987) – while even the best of the big hits have been relatively staid when it has come to tackling the themes that writers have taken on with both ingenuity and aplomb. Whatever the virtues of *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* (and they are real enough), neither film adequately catches the wit, the metaphysical paranoia or the anguished humanism of the Philip K. Dick pieces from which they were adapted. Any number of Dick's novels might make outstanding movies – *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, *A Scanner Darkly* – but so far they remain unshot, and it has fallen to an opera composer, Tod Machover (a name, incidentally, the writer himself might have coined), to translate Dick's *Valis* into another medium.

There are honourable exceptions to the general drift away from speculation, and the name of David Cronenberg must be high on any list of the justified. Though it has no direct connection with Dick, *Videodrome* shares something of the vertiginous quality of his world, while Cronenberg's other films – *The Fly*, *Rabid* – have taken over the medical anxieties which bulk so large in real life but of which other film-makers have largely fought shy. For the most part, though, the predictive dimension of science-fiction films has dwindled as the films themselves have fallen into plagiarism and in-breeding. The routine quality of so many of our recent imagined futures seems all the more tepid in the light cast by Kubrick's *2001*, a pioneering film in at least two senses of the term.

What *2001* proved was that science-fiction films could feel free to do what the best writers had always done. Viewers of *2001* were divided into those who thought the film was a utopia (all that lovely gleaming technology) and those

who thought it was a dystopia (the appalling flavourlessness of its dialogue and shallowness of its characters), but both groups sat and watched. Conclusion: provided the audience is kept happy with a few scraps of generic business, film-makers can feel free to do precisely as they wish – toy with a weird, semi-Nietzschean evolutionary theory, confront what Kubrick and Clarke referred to as "the God concept", force the audience to endure longueurs that might have made Antonioni fidget, and bombard them with minute after minute of abstract images, all capped with a symbol-heavy finale about rebirth that most of us found utterly impenetrable. And they – that is, we – loved it.

Some of us still do, but *2001* has had no true successors (least of all in *2010*, which does not aim to be much more than an entertaining space adventure movie with just a touch of mystical uplift), although it did set standards for the way space travel was depicted that film-makers ignored at their peril. Indeed, as the millennium draws closer, there are ways in which *2001* looks more impressive than ever – it is itself mutating into that rare thing, a vision of the future which has not dated. Or, to be more exact, has dated only a little, and mostly in its second sequence. Pan Am is not going to be running a shuttle service to orbiting space stations in eight years time; and unless there's a major 60s fashion revival, those natty suits and neat haircuts are going to look decidedly retro.

Curiously, though, this nugatory flaw in Kubrick's film is a pointer to one way in which nightmare films may be said to have changed for the better (in any aspect other than the purely technical). Since even quite young children can now grasp the fact that futuristic films rapidly start to look more like the year in which they were made than the year in which they were set, film-makers now seem to be making a virtue out of the genre's built-in redundancy. Imagined futures are becoming ever more frank portraits of the present. Granted, not many directors have been quite so audacious as Godard in *Alphaville* (1965), unashamedly set in contemporary Paris, but the *RoboCop* films, for instance, make only the most token pretence that they aren't set in and concerned with our own time. What was once wild extrapolation has become mild exaggeration.

And that is why futurist nightmares, for all their deepening violence and mandatory cynicism, have also become so soothing of late. Either, like detective films, they introduce stern and invulnerable parents into the mess and danger of our everyday lives and set things to rights, or they endorse our disgust with the modern world, oblige us by smashing it to fragments (Stephen King has confessed to the sheer glee he felt in demolishing his culture when he wrote *The Stand*) and let us romp among the rubble with a handsome uncle like Mad Max.

Once upon a time, our fantasies of things to come were masochistic and suicidal: Winston Smith gave in to Big Brother, the H-bombs thundered and the earth died screaming. Now they are vengeful, triumphant, survivalist. The nightmare has become an adventure playground.

J. G. Ballard

“In the past people were tremendously optimistic about the role technology and the machine played in our lives. At the end of the Second World War, science and technology were king. They had won the war, they had created the atom bomb, they'd created antibiotics, jet travel, television. The blueprint of the world in which we live now was laid down in the 40s and early 50s. However, part of that blueprint was the threat of nuclear war, and I think the shine went off the scientific apple soon after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atom bombs and definitely after the explosion of the first H-bomb.

Then later in the 60s and 70s molecular biology and so on made people very wary of advances in medical science. Today, people are rather nervous of science and to some extent nervous of the machine. The fortunate thing from the machine's point of view is that it has become invisible. The only machines people see these days are the unimportant ones: the food blenders, the motor car, the TV set in the corner. The important machines are those that link us to our local bank and link the bank to the great financial centres in our cities and to the global finance networks that govern the planet. These machines are invisible. We've got to learn to live in a realm of invisible technologies in order to master the future.

Virtual reality, if it comes on stream, will represent the greatest challenge to the human race since the invention of the language. The fact that an illusion of reality can be electronically created has all sorts of consequences that one can't anticipate. As this artificial reality will be, as they say, user friendly, it will enable us to fulfil, without hurting each other or even ourselves, all our most extraordinary and deviant fantasies. Rather than just watching a film, let's say about the assassination of Kennedy, we'll be able to play the assassin Oswald, Kennedy himself and Kennedy's wife if we wish. When we watch a murder mystery, we won't be watching someone else commit a crime, but if we want to we'll be able to play the criminal or the victim. For the first time we will be able to play with our own psychopathology as a game. This is a game with what are potentially very dangerous consequences.”

Hold on, lads

It was a bitterly cold evening and the queue for the Cambridge ABC stretched from the market right back to the Corn Exchange, several hundred yards away. "This is the queue for *Monty Python's Life of Brian*," the cinema manager bellowed. "Anybody for *Yesterday's Hero*?"

It was a traumatic moment. For a few seconds, I think, we toyed with the idea of staying put, pretending that we were just ordinary students with ordinary student tastes; to extract ourselves from the line was to admit that we were hopeless cases, cultural outcasts, cretins. Who else, after all, would pay to see a film starring Paul Nicholas, Ian McShane and Suzanne Somers? (Why did the manager have to use the films' titles? Surely the cinema numbers would have done just as well, unless he was deliberately trying to humiliate us.) But the lure of football on the big screen was just too strong, and we headed for the foyer, trying to avoid eye contact with everyone we passed on the way. I definitely heard some sniggering, though.

Yesterday's Hero is a truly terrible film, probably the worst British film since the war – worse than *Absolute Beginners*, worse than *The Pope Must Die*, worse, even, than the misguided attempt to make a movie star out of Reg Varney in *On the Buses*. I loved every minute of it, of course – it is quite impossible not to love a film about footie. And its attempt to solve the great dilemma – do you cast footballers who can't act, or actors who can't play football? – is so breathtakingly daft that its place in the affections of all fans is safe forever.

Paul Nicholas – and stop me if you've heard this before – is a millionaire pop-star chairman trying to change the fortunes of the little club, the Saints, that he has loved since he was a boy; Ian McShane is a gifted playboy striker whose drinking has apparently ended his career. Nicholas gives him another chance, and in the end he scores a last-minute Cup-winning penalty at Wembley, against Leicester Forest.

The genius of *Yesterday's Hero* is this: it uses film of a real Cup Final, between Nottingham Forest and Southampton (in other words Forest vs the Saints, which means that banners, scarves and so on make sense) for its climactic last scenes, and cuts Ian McShane into the action only when necessary. *Zelig* it isn't (you couldn't have bought a Third Division centre half on this kind of budget); McShane is never seen in the same frame as any of his opponents, and so he is given rather more space than gifted strikers are usually allowed in Wembley Cup Finals. How could he fail to score, when for technical reasons nobody is allowed to tackle him? The match-winning penalty, incidentally, is shot from above, neatly excluding both the crowd and McShane's team mates.

To make matters worse, John Motson is roped in to provide the fictional final with a fictional commentary. It is perfectly obvious to the audience that McShane is playing with Alan Ball and Mike Channon, but against Peter Shilton and Archie Gemmill (who else but desperate, and therefore knowledgeable, soccer fans would pay to

Starved of any great football film, Nick Hornby, author of 'Fever Pitch', watches truly terrible football films – and loves them



Sick as a parrot: Ian McShane as the footballer brought low by drinking and a bad script

watch the film?). But it is poor Motson's job to convince us otherwise. "Great save from Bloggs, there," he enthuses, as Shilton tips a shot over the bar. "What a pass from Smith," he shrieks, as Ball lofts the ball into the penalty area. I for one have never been able to feel the same way about Motson since; football fans never forgive this sort of betrayal. Sad fact: I have the soundtrack, if anyone wants to borrow it.

Yesterday's Hero was followed swiftly by the equally ludicrous *Escape to Victory*, directed by John Huston (and anyone who still subscribes to auteurism should be made to watch *Escape to Victory* over and over again until he or she recants). You want footballers who can't act? Well, here's Pele and Ossie Ardiles and Mike Summerbee. You want actors who can't play football? What about Michael Caine, who even back in 1982 looked as though he might be a little short of international pace. And then, of course, there is Sylvester Stallone.

Escape to Victory is about a soccer match in Paris between a group of POWs (Caine, Ardiles and the rest) and their Nazi captors. The idea is that at half-time the French Resistance tunnels up into the dressing room and leads the assembled Brazilians, Americans, Brits and Argentinians – no explanation is offered for this most exotic of Allied groupings – to freedom. The French have reckoned without the irresistible magnetism of football, however. "Hold on, lads," Mike Summerbee says as the rest of his team is about to disappear down the Parisian drainage system. "We can win this game!" And rather than escape, the lads (4-1 down after a series of dubious pro-Nazi refereeing decisions) return to the pitch for the second half.

And what a 45 minutes it is. A German thug breaks Pele's shoulder, but the great man plays on anyway and scores with a bicycle kick; the Allies claw their way back to 4-4; and then in the last minute Stallone saves a penalty, despite never having played football before, to send the French crowd so wild that they storm the pitch and usher

the Michael Caine Select XI out of the ground and away. It is true that in many ways *Escape to Victory* is not as good as *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Man Who Would Be King* or *The Dead*, but to argue that it is inferior is to argue that content is merely a poor relation of style. *Escape to Victory* is about football, and *The Dead* is not. I rest my case.

Yesterday's Hero and *Escape to Victory* remain the masterpieces of soccer cinema. There are other films with noteworthy football sequences: *Kes* features Brian Glover's chilling play as a berserk games teacher who commentates on his own performance and awards himself penalties; *My Life As A Dog* contains a great own-goal; and though I remember being disappointed by the animals' football match in *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, it might well be worth another look.

Those seeking action will be disappointed by the recent *Cup Final*. It features just a couple of goals from the 1982 World Cup (Rossi's hat trick against Brazil in the quarter-final and Italy's third – seen on television through binoculars – against West Germany in the final). Paradoxically, however, football fans will understand the film better than anyone. It is not the love for Italy shared by the two central characters, an Israeli and his PLO captor, that provokes this understanding – the people's game as peace-maker is a cliché that has been with us since the Great War. Rather, the really poignant image in *Cup Final* is the unused World Cup Final ticket that Cohen fingers lovingly throughout his ordeal.

For most of us, the idea of attending a World Cup Final is an impossible ambition of a lifetime. Cohen's agonising inability to fulfil this dream is a perfectly simple and universally comprehensible evocation of a gone-to-hell dystopia. *Cup Final* – set in the Lebanon, deadly serious, completely devoid of footballers who can't act and actors who can't play football – shows a greater appreciation of the power of the game than any number of Stallone saves or McShane penalties. And there's no Suzanne Somers, either.

'Projections' and the screenwriter

"I'm kind of fascinated with the idea of eliminating the writer from the artistic process." Griffin Mill, *The Player*

A few years ago one of our most honourable and respected producers, while in the process of booting my pitch down the stairs, told me that there is a crisis in British screenwriting. As I sheepishly followed my rejected idea out of the building, my own *esprit de l'escalier* whispered that what I should have said was that if there is indeed such a self-evident crisis, then perhaps it might have something to do with the catastrophe that is British production.

But fear not for the future – soon producers will be shrugging, "Crisis? What crisis?" Scarcely a term goes by without one of our new universities offering hungry wannabees courses in script development, while the small-ads columns of film journals detail seminars which will transform the fledgling screenwriter's prospects over the course of a long and expensive weekend. I myself have even been known to step out and proselytise, using my own infallible system for getting your protagonist out of the tree you've just put him/her into which is derived from Cheyenne shamanic shape-shifting strategies I came across once in a book by Levi-Strauss. (Believe me, it works!)

Every writer, no matter how experienced, is a struggling writer and so, for the benefit of all of us whose natural habitat is the liminal zone and whose natural state is one of terminal crisis, I have endeavoured to distil some nuggets of advice from the writers and directors who have contributed to this year's *Projections*.

The fine British writer/director Sidney Gilliat tells a remarkable story about how he got into the business. His father had a friend who was a Fleet Street film critic who was about to go and work for one of the studios – this is in the mid-20s – and needed a young assistant. Sidney had just been to see Ford's *The Iron Horse*, which he had much enjoyed, but which the critic had panned. The pompous oaf asked the young man what he thought of the picture and, not wanting to embarrass his father, Gilliat "said something lame like, 'I thought it lacked flair.'" To which the critic replied: "This boy should go into films. Why, he might make as much as ten thousand pounds a year." From this we can extract the first law of screenwriting crisis management: *The screenwriter must never tell the truth, especially not to the powerful.*

Tim Robbins, in his introduction to the script of *Bob Roberts*, reminds us of the way the mass media is used to "manufacture consent" (Chomsky's cogent term) and goes on to add: "a media that allows itself to be restricted, monitored and intimidated by its government is not a 'free' press and is certainly not fulfilling its role in a democracy." Hence the second law: *The absolute duty of the screenwriter is to tell the truth and shame the powerful at all times.*

Alison Maclean, the writer/director of *Crush*, tells us that the genesis of her film was her desire "to do a film that dealt with a complex female anti-hero," and which "looked at the intensity of that kind of

Should the wannabee screenwriter rely on shamanic shape-shifting strategies, or can the words of Tim Robbins, Alison Maclean and Robert Altman help, asks Michael Eaton?

teenage infatuation with someone worldly and sophisticated and fearless." Thus, the third law: *The starting point of any script lies in the character and theme.*

In an admirably lucid interview with Jaco van Dormael, auteur of *Toto le héros*, the young Belgian cinéaste contributes several fail-safe arrows to the scriptwriter's quiver. On a matter very close to my own heart, he says: "It is in the writing and then again in the editing that a director is closest to narrative." It has long been my contention that the temperament needed to write and that needed to edit are almost exactly congruent – editing is writing, but with an existing lexicon of images and sounds rather than an imagined set of possibilities. However, the person-management skills (among others) needed by the director are psychologically antithetical to what is required in pre- and post-production. Yet in the currently prevailing systems, there is no structural or contractual necessity or obligation for the writer ever to visit (or, indeed, be allowed into) the cutting room. One television editor said to me: "I've worked in this cutting room since 1968 and you're only the fourth writer who's been in here." Fourth rule: *The screenwriter should not be paid off on the first day of principal photography.*

The main burden of Dormael's contribution, however, is to insist on the central necessity of narrative structure: "the story has to be built like a Greek tragedy or a comedy. That's what Aristotle says and the same rules apply today." All story-telling rules originate ultimately in the Greek theatre. Fifth rule: *The meaning of any story derives from its narrative structure.*

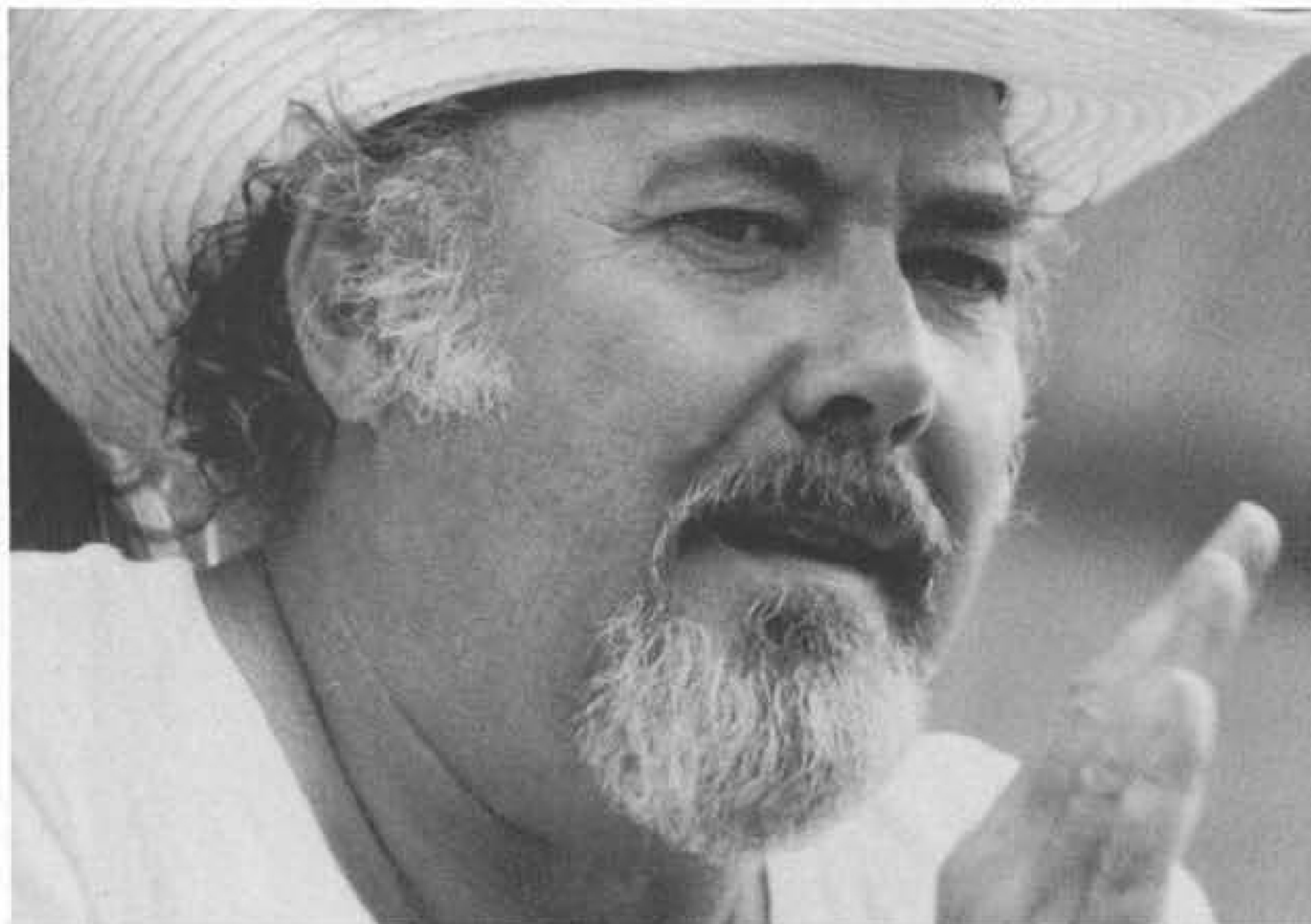
George Miller, a writer/director/producer who is equally adept at high-concept action-adventure pictures such as the *Mad Max* series and politically discursive drama documentaries such as the groundbreaking *The Dismissal*, reminds us that successful stories speak to all the people in all ages and cultures because they spring bubbling out of the "collective unconscious". So rule number six: *Movies, like myths, are centrally concerned with the quest of the hero. We begin to*

see how, if we are prepared to open ourselves to the experiences of those whose work we admire, story-telling can be condensed into a few basic formulae. Screenwriting is not a crisis, it's a doddle.

For the mystical seventh principle, we must turn to the great Robert Altman. For him: "A plot is a clothes-line... on which to hang a bunch of thumbnail essays, little commentaries." Narrative is a lying distortion of the complexity of life. Character can never be understood through psycho-babble notions of motivation: "Everybody feels they have to have an explanation of why everybody does everything, and my contention is simply that that is not truthful. I don't know one person, and I don't know one person who knows one person, who is not eccentric." So, for our final rule, we might do well to paraphrase the words of Hassan-i-Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountains: *Nothing is known. Everything is permitted. Transcend the crisis. Get writing.*

Postscript

It should be said that I felt rather tentative about approaching *Projections*, this welcome annual, since last year, when I used the contents of the first volume to riff off on the dangers of candour, my article received a smouldering response from one of its editors. His attack could have been labelled *ad hominem*, except that it was evident that the correspondent had no idea who this particular *homo* was. My mild-mannered remarks seem vindicated by a quotation from Karel Reitz in the present volume, who says: "We [film-makers] feel we have to pretend that everything is going well otherwise they think we are on the slide." Perhaps the response could be better described as *ad institutionem*, except that the institution in question went on to give *Projections 1* the BFI Michael Powell Award for the film book of the year. So please, Mr Boorman, the above remarks are to be considered as neither analytical nor critical – merely heuristic. *'Projections: A forum for film-makers', Issue 2, John Boorman and Walter Donohue (eds), Faber and Faber, £9.99, paperback*



Robert Altman: "I don't know one person... who is not eccentric"

Eyes on the prize

Michael Eaton

The Oscars: The Secret History of Hollywood's Academy Awards

Anthony Holden, Little, Brown and Co, £16.99, 766pp

Alternate Oscars

Danny Peary, Simon and Schuster, £12.99, 325pp

"If you can go past those awful idiot faces on the bleachers outside of the theater without a sense of the collapse of the human intelligence; and if you can go out into the night and see half the police force of Los Angeles gathered to protect the golden ones from the mob in the free seats, but not from the awful moaning sound they give out, like destiny whistling through a hollow shell; if you can do these things and still feel the next morning that the picture business is worth the attention of one simple intelligent, artistic mind, then in the picture business you certainly belong, because this sort of vulgarity, the very vulgarity from which the Oscars are made, is the inevitable price Hollywood exacts from its serfs."

Thus wrote Raymond Chandler in the 40s; but the magazine editor who commissioned this diatribe never committed it to print. The Academy Awards ceremony is such a potent ritual that to cast scorn upon it is to risk the wrath of the gods. Win or lose, Oscars are sacred and sanctity is dangerous. The only pertinent Chandler on offer here is Dorothy, in whose eponymous pavilion the little statuettes are annually bestowed.

To today's teenage audiences, it might well seem that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is a machine designed expressly for the exclusion of Steven Spielberg (he who wailed, on camera, at yet another humiliation: "I don't believe it - they picked Fellini instead of me," and who is also reputed to have declared of Barbra Streisand's *Yentl*: "Terrific. It's the best film I have seen since *Citizen Kane*" - though in this instance it was Barbra herself who did the reporting). The Academy was, in fact, set up in the late 20s as a kind of inter-studio sweetheart union to police labour dissent and potential combination among the various crafts in the business. The awards began life as a side issue, a public relations exercise which allowed the studio bosses to pat one another on the back.

Today, Anthony Holden informs us in *The Oscars*, the Academy voters tend to be "the older, often retired members of the film community". There are about 5,000 of them, with an average age of 60, and the honoured motion pictures tend to reflect their liberal politics and conservative aesthetics. They esteem pictures with 'humanistic' values over brute box-office success, although winning an Oscar (and Holden gives several apocryphal accounts of how the 13½ inch statuette got its name, none of them interesting or convincing) can add something like \$30 million in post-award takings. So if Spielberg does get nominated, it is for a 'spiritually uplifting' 'social picture' such as *The Color Purple* rather than for *Jaws* or *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. (Of course, if Award nominations were a measure of

greatness, then the greatest film of all time would be *Ben-Hur* with 11.)

Genre films - though they are the most enduring of the US film industry's staple fare and the most consistently valued by audiences, buffs and academics - tend to be given the cold shoulder (last year's *The Silence of the Lambs* tested this practice). By the time this review is published, the reader will know whether the former mayor of Carmel has managed to blow away the anti-Western precedent. Comedies are usually avoided unless made by Woody Allen (who always spends Oscar night tootling on the old licorice stick 3,000 miles away in Manhattan - the only time, an old jazzier once said, that Allen made him laugh). If comedians receive awards it is usually for playing against type in straight roles - so Jack Lemmon had to wait for *The China Syndrome* and *Save the Tiger* to achieve his nominations.

Best actors tend to get nominated for their worst pictures on the principle that their time has come (so maybe Al Pacino - winner of my award for best judgment on the Oscars by a loser: "Fame is a perversion of the natural human instinct for attention" - is in with a chance this year). Playing characters who are physically or mentally impaired increases chances of nomination exponentially (*vide* Dustin Hoffman and Daniel Day-Lewis in recent years). Leading roles in bio-pics often seem to fit the serious social purpose criterion, so next year may well see the nominations of Jack Nicholson and Denzel Washington.

The Academy appears to appreciate a performance that involves putting on a funny voice, a principle which has caused British films and performers to be disproportionately honoured, since we do this so naturally. Colin Welland's famous cry of jubilation after *Chariots of Fire* seems somewhat hyberbolic - the British have always come, proving a continual bone of contention among LA's homeboys and girls and prompting Hedda Hopper in the 60s to reflect: "I wonder why we hate ourselves? I'm not going to be narrow enough to claim these fellows can't act. They've had plenty of practice. The weather is so foul on that tight little island of theirs that, to get in out of the rain, they all gather in theaters and practise Hamlet on each other."

Our thespians have, I'm proud to say, always treated the event with the proper mixture of churlish dismissal and over-enthusiastic gratitude. One English performer, twice a recipient, declared (before the awards) that the whole shebang was nothing but "a machine run by people who are serving an idea which no longer exists, never did exist and which, in any case, is a lie." She promptly reconsidered (six weeks later, on the night) and found herself suddenly "surprised" and "delighted" to have her name pulled out of the famous envelope. Some might consider such exceptional powers of duplicity and hypocrisy wasted even in Hollywood, so it is to the voters of Hampstead that we should present a special award for sending Glenda Jackson to the Palace of Westminster, if only to keep her off the cinema screen.

Other great moments of inaptitude or ineptitude are on parade here: John Wayne's attempt to shame as un-American all those who didn't vote for *The Alamo*; Vanessa Redgrave's attack on "Zionist hoodlums" cou-

pled with her pledge to continue "to fight against anti-semitism"; Marlon Brando's delegation of Sacheen Littlefeather of the Apache nation to accept his award for *The Godfather* as a protest against "the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry". Littlefeather turned out to be an out-of-work starlet who had redded up specially for the role - thus, it could be argued, personally incarnating the truth of Brando's protest.

Meryl Streep left hers in the ladies' room; George C. Scott refused to pick his up; and in 1982 a Polish film-maker - the household name Zbigniew Rybczynski - won his for best Animated Short Subject, popped out for a cig, tried to re-take his seat and was refused admittance by a security guard. A brawl ensued, whereupon the luckless animator was bundled into a paddy wagon by Los Angeles' finest and spent the night in a holding tank before being returned to the Warsaw Pact as an example of *détente* in action.

For most of us, the Academy Awards ceremony exists as a kitsch delight in the television calendar. Once again Andrew Sarris operates as a reliable reverse cinematic barometer in his judgment that, "The Oscar ceremony is now designed to inflict as much pain and suffering as possible on both its participants and viewers." Nonsense, we love it! ABC pays \$2 million for the privilege of broadcasting it and charges a record \$10,000 a second for commercials. It is watched by a billion fans in about 100 countries (although we British viewers, with our post-hoc precis, get short shrift). If television was the death of the Hollywood studio system that invented the Academy, it has stepped in to ensure the continuing apotheosis of the ritual.

While Holden usually writes biographies of establishment folk like Larry or the Heir of Sorrows, Prince Charles, Peary usually writes books about cult movies, so I expected his alternative choices to be more bizarre than they turned out to be. By the time I had struggled through Holden's 766 pages, I was so thoroughly sickened by every aspect of the film industry's belittling attempts at self-promotion that I had forwarded his book to a psychiatrist chum who specialises in treating cinephilia.

All in all, I found myself agreeing with Chandler. But then the messenger arrived: my film biography of Mother Theresa starring kooky Bette Midler, cast against type with a wimple and an accent, and wacky Chevy Chase as the lover she abandons, has been nominated for Best Original (and I use the word with pride) Screenplay. My peers, I salute you.

Drawing the line

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

Popular European Cinema

Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (eds), Routledge, £35 (hb), £11.99 (pb), 272pp

The idea of popular European cinema is rich in contradictions. For a start, European cinema is on the whole not popular, even in Europe. In many European countries, Britain included, American (Hollywood) films account for up to 80 per cent of the box office while indigenous production is

sustained by subsidy and the ramshackle relics of protectionist legislation. If European films show signs of being or becoming popular, they are soon co-opted into an international system which is in fact American. Expensive films are not viable on the domestic market alone, or even on the sum of the European domestic markets. They therefore have to be pre-sold in the American market, and made and marketed on the model of American films. James Bond movies are now (except for the nationality of the hero) to all intents and purposes American. Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* and Charles Crichton's *A Fish Called Wanda* were all American-backed. Meanwhile commercially viable European films on small-to-medium budgets get fewer and fewer and some countries have more or less given up on them.

This has not always been the case. The subsidy systems which put a fence around a particular notion of (non-popular) art cinema are of recent origin, and old-fashioned popular films are still successful in their home markets, even if not many of them are now made. *Carry On* films still attract audiences of 3 to 4 million when shown on television in Britain. But only in Britain. While Jerry Lewis – and Dean Martin, and Steve Martin – might be in demand throughout Europe, who outside Britain knows about *Carry On* films (let alone Norman Wisdom)? Who outside France knows Louis de Funès? Or Totò outside Italy?

This is the second contradiction of European popular cinema: it is not European, it is the cinema of individual European countries. Comedy in particular travels badly. What makes it popular at home often makes it incomprehensible outside the language area or culture zone in which it originates. Totò films, hardly known in northern Europe, circulated quite widely in southern Europe and Latin America, though much of the humour was inevitably lost in Spanish or Portuguese subtitling or dubbing.

The problem, then, is not that popular European films do not exist, but that they are not well known and, in so far as they are known, they are hard to classify in a unified way. They are uncomfortably diverse and both their popularity and their European-ness are often ambiguous. *Popular European Cinema* is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to map Europe in terms of indigenous popular film. The essays in the book originated as papers given at a conference at the University of Warwick in 1989. The essays are varied, both in content and tone: they cover popular genres and popular heroes, national cinemas and sub- or transnational cinemas (such as the Franco-Maghrebi *cinéma beur*), forms of representation and the mechanics of distribution, the utterly unexportable (film versions of French radio shows) and the eminently fashionable (Almodóvar). The editors and conference organisers Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau have wisely refrained from any attempt to homogenise this variety and in their introduction modestly describe the book as “shading in the colours” on the European map. More ambitiously, they use the introduction to stake out certain principles for defining both the popular and the European – in other words, for saying what the map is a map of.

The conclusions they reach are on the



European or international? Bertolucci's 'The Last Emperor', made and marketed on the model of American films, exemplifies the hybrid nature of European cinema

whole tentative, perhaps disappointingly so. The editors remain unsure as to where the boundaries of Europe need to be drawn or what degree of unity, and at what level, can be found within those boundaries. They hesitate between definitions of the popular in terms of numbers (how many people go to see a film, how much they pay) and cultural-historical definitions (the popular as belonging to 'the people'). But they are right to be tentative. Popular film is a cultural rather than just a box-office category: but its cultural connotations, as they point out, are not easily grasped within the inherited categories of 'folk' (or alternatively 'mass') versus 'elite'. As for definitions of Europe, these are almost always dangerously tendentious, posing west against east, white against non-white, 'democracy' against communism, Christianity against Islam. European culture (particularly popular culture) does not fit within the politicians' maps, and it is a great strength of *Popular European Cinema* that its map is delicately shaded, that it recognises differences rather than oppositions, and does not set Europe against non-Europe or, for that matter, against America.

Because the book is concerned with films produced and consumed mainly within Europe, it misses out on an area which is even less researched than popular European cinema itself, that of European film exports. This may seem marginal, but in fact the question of which European films have succeeded abroad (and also which non-European, non-Hollywood films have been popular in Europe) is very illuminating about the boundaries of European culture and therefore the definition of Europe itself. The eastern Mediterranean, where three continents and several cultures meet

and where the trade in films is very complex, is a particularly interesting area. No less intriguing is the export of Italian and Spanish films to Latin America and the recent reverse flow of Brazilian and Mexican *telenovelas* to Spain and Portugal. After many years of fixation on the east-west divide, it is perhaps time to look again at the cultural differences that separate Europe north to south and link the south with other worlds entirely.

Over length, over budget

Richard Maltby

Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick
David Thomson, André Deutsch,
£20, 792pp

The acknowledgments of this book demonstrate how the big, fat movie biography is changing. Before the lists of famous interviewees who supplied the anecdotes come the credits for those academics, archivists and students who steered David Thomson through the awesome Selznick archive at the Harry Ransom Research Center at the University of Texas in Austin. Movie history is serious business these days – serious enough to be catalogued and stored in humidity-controlled vaults. Entertainment is acquiring some of the paraphernalia of academia, and in the process becoming almost respectable.¹

But in this case, unless you read the acknowledgments, you probably wouldn't notice the change, because this big, fat movie biography's preoccupations are much the same as those of any other: the lifestyles, nepotism and dynastic feuding of the rich and famous, their broken families and failed marriages, their decorators' bills and sexual excesses. Born into one movie dynasty, Selznick entered another when he married Louis B. Mayer's daughter Irene in 1930 and gave birth to the comment that in Hollywood "the son-in-law also rises." But what really makes Selznick's case different is not his success, but the excess with which it is documented. That archive in Austin has 25 tons of paper in it. That's a lot of memos – more, almost, than it's possible to imagine one man could have dictated – so it's quite reassuring to come across at least one incident revealing that even Selznick himself didn't always read his own output. Only 12 pages from the end of the book and ►

1. Not quite all the paraphernalia of academe. Call me a crusty old academic, but I do like a good footnote: the sort that has little numbers at the end of paragraphs to send you off to the back of the book to find out where the information cited comes from. A number of large American publishers appear to have decided that those little numbers frighten readers off; perhaps they make books look too serious. So instead, *Showman* has a clumsy set of references called "Source Notes" at the back. Every time I had to manhandle the book to find out whether there was a note for the quotation I'd just read, I thought how exactly that compromise in presentation encapsulated the book's uncomfortable disequilibrium between the research library and the bio-pic.

◀ three months before his death, Thomson describes him apologising to his younger son for the abrasive contents of one three-page cable: "I'm really sorry. I just didn't know what this read like."

At Selznick's funeral, Cary Grant read a tribute from William Paley suggesting that the word that best described Selznick was "extravagance". His most celebrated movies were as extravagant with their running times as they were with their budgets. Including its interval, *Gone with the Wind* runs over four hours and *Since You Went Away*, his celebration of "that unconquerable fortress the American home," just shades three. He has inspired equally lengthy publication projects: Rudy Behlmer's *Memo from David O. Selznick* runs to 600 pages and Ronald Haver's *David O. Selznick's Hollywood*, the most lavish coffee-table movie book ever, is too heavy to lift. It would be quite out of character for this biography, sanctioned if not commissioned by the family, to be short, and in that respect its 792 pages don't disappoint. That archive, the remains of Selznick's unimaginable linguistic excess, is another manifestation of his extravagance, and Thomson has tremendous difficulties constructing a coherent story out of it. As one of the more hostile reviewers of Margaret Mitchell's novel wrote of the source of Selznick's most abiding monument: "The narrative pace is unflagging. And if depth and literary distinction are wanting – well, it is the lesson of Scarlett's career that one can't have everything."

Thomson argues that Behlmer's selection from Selznick's memos emphasised the producer's decisiveness, while he has discovered that their full weight reveals "a less certain and more beleaguered man". But that is in large part because of what Thomson chooses to write about and what he chooses to omit. Perhaps because he thinks that others have already done it, Thomson has remarkably little to say about the movies Selznick made so obsessively, unless their plots echo Selznick family traumas: the beleaguered man as unconscious auteur. It is not a scenario that fits much of his work before 1945. *Gone with the Wind* was the pinnacle of a career far more interesting on its way up than on its way down, but at Oscar night in 1940, *Showman* is not even half way through. By the end of this book, you will know more than you ever really wanted to about Selznick's monthly gambling bills, his Benzedrine addiction and his lack of poetic talent, but you will know surprisingly little more about Hollywood, unless you think that Hollywood is really about producers mechanically groping actresses in taxis.

More academically inclined film histories will use Selznick's archives to tell different stories about the industry Hollywood was and why it made the cultural products it did. Indeed, some already have. Thomas Schatz's *The Genius of the System* provides a more coherent account of the relationship between the major studios and independent production companies like Selznick's than Thomson's description of the tragic dynasties of Lewis J. Selznick and Louis B. Lear. *Showman* still believes that if you want to sell in volume, you have to make the history of entertainment an entertaining story. Failing to find a better plot, it finally follows that familiar Hollywood narrative in which



the son-in-law rises but then falls. In eventually giving in to the family melodrama, Selznick's biography tells us little about Hollywood that Selznick had not himself already told us in *What Price Hollywood* and *A Star Is Born*.

Frankly my dear, the gambling bills are neither here nor there: 'Gone with the Wind', David O. Selznick's abiding monument and a prime example of his notorious extravagance

Bitter tears

Tony Rayns

The Anarchy of the Imagination: Interviews, Essays, Notes

Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Töteberg and Leo A. Lensing (eds), translated by Krishna Winston, The Johns Hopkins University Press, £34 (hb), £12 (pb), 251pp

Rainer Werner Fassbinder died in 1982, and it's a pity that it has taken so long for his non-dramatic writings and his German interviews to be translated into English. This selective anthology draws material from the two mass-market paperbacks that Michael Töteberg edited for the Frankfurt publisher Fischer Verlag: *Filme befreien den Kopf* (1984) and *Die Anarchie der Phantasie* (1986). The appearance of these careful translations through an American university press at a time when RWF's films have all but vanished from international circulation is certainly too late and probably too little to re-establish Fassbinder as the key figure in European cinema he was. These writings and interviews were intended to be read alongside the films in the West Germany of the 70s – that is, in a divided country, on the front line of the Cold War, with the 'liberal' state enacting contentious legislation in the name of 'security'. Many of these pages will mean little to readers with short memories or to those too young to have seen the films on first release.

It is ironic that publishing Fassbinder should have become an academic enterprise, because Fassbinder himself was anything but academic. Largely self-taught, he developed a highly idiosyncratic form of address: a kind of *faux-naïf* literalism that softened up the viewer/reader for unexpected political punchlines, a calculated mixture of high culture, bathos, pop culture and realpolitik. In terms of twentieth-

century gay culture, he's an improbable cross between Gore Vidal and Joe Orton. The finest single example of his distinctive 'voice' is his own narration for the film *Effi Briest* (1974): he respects the precision and savours the delicate irony of Fontane's words, but speaks them with a faint plebeian vulgarity, subliminally distancing himself from the petty-bourgeois values that Fontane ultimately endorsed. On the other hand, no other director since Mizoguchi has cared more about establishing his intellectual credibility; Fassbinder's determination to prove himself at least the intellectual equal of his university graduate contemporaries dictated not only his literary and dramatic interests but also a large number of his political stances.

Fassbinder characterised much of his work as "spontaneous reactions to reality", but made it a point of principle to blur the line between objective and subjective realities. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than his hatred of the city of Frankfurt, which surfaces here in discussions around his banned play *Garbage, the City, and Death* (eventually filmed as *Shadows of Angels* by Daniel Schmid, with Fassbinder himself in the cast), and in the detailed literary prequel to the film *In a Year with Thirteen Moons*. The controversial play centres on the social depredations of a rich Jewish property developer, but insists that unseen politicians and bureaucrats are exploiting the 'untouchable' status of Jews in modern Germany to achieve things they otherwise could not, thereby, of course, fomenting a renewed current of anti-semitism in German society. The play is said to have been inspired by a real-life case in Frankfurt, and Fassbinder was director-in-residence in the city's Theater am Turm when the play was banned. *In a Year with Thirteen Moons*, widely taken as Fassbinder's response to the suicide of his illiterate lover Armin Meier, opens the door to more Frankfurt-bashing as the city is castigated for "practically demanding" tragic life stories like the protagonist's. There is no doubt much to criticise in Frankfurt's local politics and social infrastructure, but Fassbinder's virulence was obviously occasioned more by the banning of the play and his stormy exit from the Theater am Turm than by a reasoned comparison of Frankfurt with other West German cities. In truth, Frankfurt is merely the whipping-city for Fassbinder's anger at the the German state.

There is plenty in the book to substantiate Fassbinder's position as the exemplary European film-maker of his day, plenty to back up the claim staked by the films themselves for an engaged and provocative cinema that can rival Hollywood on its own terms. Aside from the interviews, which generally find the man thinking on his feet as he runs rings around the various controversies his work has deliberately courted, the book contains all of Fassbinder's rare ventures into film criticism – his endearing love letter to Douglas Sirk's melodramas, his more-sad-than-angry account of Chabrol's 'failure', even his "Hitlist of German Films" – all of which testify to his commitment to the struggle to build a viable and worthwhile film culture in Europe. It also contains his almost shockingly candid analysis of his relationship with Hanna Schygulla, between the lines of which are his mixed feelings about his purposive

attempt to create a European star-system to match Hollywood's.

The process of editorial selection for this edition has eliminated virtually all discussion of Fassbinder's early work for theatre, film and television (up to and including the television series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*) and thrown a somewhat disproportionate weight on *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in a way that presumably reflects the availability of Fassbinder's work on video in the US. Krishna Winston's translation is scrupulous and resourceful. As often in such cases, the only inaccuracies I've found arise when the specialist editors need to range into other areas of film culture: hence the references to *Solares* by A. Tarkovski and a Godard film called *Pierre le fou*.

Remember this

Suzanne Moore

The Casablanca File

Colin McArthur, Half Brick Images, £8.50, 48pp

A recently launched anti-establishment publication describing itself as "the magazine for internal exiles" chose to call itself *Casablanca*. Why? Were the editors referring to the town in Morocco, the Hollywood movie, or both? What did they intend to conjure up by using this word?

In *The Casablanca File* Colin McArthur traces the meanings the movie *Casablanca* has generated – from television advertisements to sub-editors' headlines and to the names of bars and restaurants all over the world. Phrases such as "Play it again, Sam" (not actually in the movie), "Here's looking at you, kid", "You must remember this" are so often quoted in so many different contexts that even people who have not seen the film are familiar with its language. McArthur is primarily interested in documenting this prolific intertextuality. In visual terms, his argument succeeds well; the book contains a wide range of reproductions covering advertisements, restaurant signs, book jackets and film stills from Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam* and the Marx Brothers' *A Night in Casablanca*.

However, McArthur's main thesis, expounded in an introductory essay, is problematic. Arguing that intertextuality always involves a struggle over meaning, he isolates three conflicting ideas that circulate around the film. The first is that *Casablanca* is a political melodrama; the second that it represents the well-crafted Hollywood studio movie at its best; and the third that it is a cult movie whose appeal derives from nostalgia focused on the Bogart persona. Suggesting that the film's cult status is linked to the subordination of its anti-fascist themes, McArthur sees the movie's concentration on Bogart's masculinity and romance as inevitably dependent on the repression of its political dimension.

At times, this argument comes close to reducing the complexities that the concept of intertextuality is intended to evoke to a depressingly literal level by suggesting that these different meanings – cult, political and romantic – are mutually exclusive. McArthur also seems to believe that resistance to fascism is a deeper and morally superior meaning which is lost to the more



Romancing the past: does the nostalgic love interest in Michael Curtiz's 1942 movie 'Casablanca' obscure its political, anti-fascist message?

superficial and apolitical reading of romance. Ironically, however, while *Casablanca* is perceived as supremely romantic on one level, it is in fact about the loss or impossibility of romantic love, and its most moving moments derive precisely from the intertwining of its personal and political themes. *Casablanca* demonstrates that neither love nor fascism exists in a vacuum.

While McArthur's general point about the depoliticisation of texts used in advertising is certainly true – I remember being shocked to see the feminist slogan "A Woman's Right to Choose" followed by the phrase "An 18-30 Club Holiday" – intertextuality now seems to be such an accepted part of life that the structuralist insistence on drawing attention to it seems somewhat misplaced. Most popular media today address audiences who take self-referentiality for granted; I sometimes wonder if anyone apart from structuralists has ever believed that meaning is hermetically sealed in a text.

The Casablanca File works best as a visual exposition of the operations of intertextuality, which makes it very useful as a teaching aid. But whether today's students would be at all surprised when confronted by this delirious proliferation of meanings around a single text is open to question.

The wider picture

Steve Neale

Widescreen Cinema

John Belton, Harvard University Press, £27.95 (hb), £15.25 (pb), 300pp

In *Widescreen Cinema*, John Belton provides a detailed, lucid and meticulously researched account of the development of widescreen technologies used in Hollywood – from Magnascope to CinemaScope, Cinerama to Todd-AO, VistaVision to Panavision, Super Panavision, Ultra Panavision and Super Technirama. He also offers more than a linear, empirical chronology, looking at the "complex interplay of ideological, technological, economic and socio-cultural forces", and at the place of the spectator.

This is an ambitious set of aims, and Belton's attempts to fulfil them are not always

successful. One of the most interesting chapters deals with the experiments carried out with various widescreen formats in the mid to late 20s. Belton convincingly argues that a primary motivation for these experiments was that the advent of the large picture palaces, complete with proscenium stage and lavish interior decoration, had shifted the audience's attention away from the image towards the auditorium. The experiments petered out in the early 30s, partly because synchronised sound became a technological attraction in its own right, re-focusing attention on the screen, and partly because having spent money on sound equipment, exhibitors could not afford widescreen technology too.

The reluctance or inability of theatre owners to invest in new technology also affected the adoption (and in some cases the rejection) of a number of widescreen processes in the 50s, especially those accompanied by magnetic stereo soundtracks. Belton is particularly interesting on the technical and aesthetic differences between various processes, linking CinemaScope, for instance, to the experience (and model) of Broadway theatre, and Cinerama to the thrills of the circus, amusement arcade and carnival. He also provides a fresh angle on familiar arguments about the effect on films and on cinema attendances of the expansion in post-war America of leisure activities based in and around the home. He notes, for example, a massive growth in 'active' (or 'recreational') leisure pursuits such as gardening, sports, do-it-yourself, camping and trips to national parks. This suggests that audiences deserted cinema not only because of competition from domestic entertainments, but because more people had the money and time to pursue a wide range of leisure activities.

However, when he attempts to argue that widescreen cinema introduced or encouraged a more 'active', participatory, 'recreational' relationship between spectator and image, Belton comes unstuck. 'Active' and 'passive' forms of leisure, home-based activities and activities involving travel, cannot simply be equated with 'active' or 'passive' relationships between screen and spectator, who has always in any case 'actively' left his or her home, but who is also always 'passively' sitting in his or her seat. Belton tends to collapse the two areas, with the result that the terms 'active' and 'passive' become loose, unhelpful metaphors.

He is surely right, though, when he writes about "the heightened physiological stimulation" brought about by widescreen processes, and the ways in which their adoption in the 50s redefined audiences' experience of cinema. The further transformations wrought by the dominance of television, the advent of multi-plex cinemas and the rise of video – together with the specific (and for the most part disastrous) effects these have had on the use of widescreen processes in Hollywood since the 50s – are dealt with in the final chapter of this lively, stimulating book. My only real complaint is that Belton, who is a superb critic and analyst of form, style and *mise en scène*, was either unwilling or unable to devote more space to the discussion of specific movies and the different use made of widescreen formats by directors like Sam Fuller, Nicholas Ray, Anthony Mann and Vincente Minnelli.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

Alive

USA 1992

Director: Frank Marshall

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Companies

Touchstone Pictures
Paramount Pictures

Producers

Robert Watts
Kathleen Kennedy

Co-producer

Bruce Cohen

Production Co-ordinator

Gretchen Goode

Unit Production Manager

Justis Greene

Unit Manager

2nd Unit:

Stewart Bethune

Location Managers

Dow Griffith

Robin Mounsey

2nd Unit Director

Norman Reynolds

Casting

Michael Fenton

Valorie Massalas

Vancouver:

Stuart Aikins

Assistant Directors

Kätterli Frauenfelder

Bill Bannerman

Jacque Gould

John Lind

2nd Unit:

Richard Coleman

Screenplay

John Patrick Shanley

Based on the book

by Piers Paul Read

Director of Photography

Peter James

In colour

prints by Technicolor

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

André Fleuren

A Camera Operator

David Crone

B Camera Operators

Armin Matter

Roger Vernon

Video Playback Operator

John Sanderson

Visual Effects Supervisor

Scott Farrar

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light

& Magic

Producer:

Jil-Sheree Bergin

Art Director:

William George

Optical Photography

Supervisor:

John Ellis

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Stuart Robertson

Editor:

Michael Gleason

Executive in Charge

of Production:

Patricia Blau

Camera Operators:

Terry Chostner

Kim Marks

Optical Camera

Operators:

Jeff Doran

James Lim

Optical Line-up:

Michael Ellis

Tim Geideman

CG Animators:

Greg Maloney

Dave Carson

Co-ordinator:

Penny Runge

Rotoscope Artist:

Terry Molatore

Modelmakers:

Mark Anderson

Sean Casey

John Goodson Jnr

Keith London

Lorne Peterson

Tony Sommers

Editors

Michael Kahn

William Goldenberg

Production Designer

Norman Reynolds

Art Director

Frederick Hole

Set Decorator

Tedd Kuchera

Set Dresser

Gordon Brunner

Storyboard Artist

David Lowery

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John Thomas

Special Effects Consultant

Michael Lantieri

Special Effects

Randy Shymkiw

Don B. Leask

Greg Birdsall

Siegfried Stock

Gord Davis

Terry Sonderhoff

Alan Waldron

Reg Milne

Michael Blacklock

Animatronics Engineer

Michael Steffe

Music

James Newton Howard

Orchestrations

James Newton Howard

Brad Dechter

Mark McKenzie

Chris Boardman

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Songs

"The Look of Love"

by Burt Bacharach,

Hal David; "Happy

Birthday To You" by

Patty S. Hill, Mildred

J. Hill; "Do You Know

the Way to San Jose?"

by Burt Bacharach,

Hal David, performed

by Dionne Warwick;

"Ave Maria" by Franz

Schubert, performed

by Aaron Neville

Costume Design

Jennifer Parsons

Costume Supervisor

Elaine Maser

Wardrobe

Michelle Baines

Caroline Cranstoun

Diana Patterson

Bren Moore

Jenni Gullett

Michelle Lyle

Make-up Artists

Linda Gill

Kevin Myers

Lisa Roberts

Special Effects

Make-up Design

Gordon Smith

SPFX Make-up

Raymond Mackintosh

Russell Cate

Lorne Barrie

Title Design

Dan Perri

Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Wylie Stateman

Gregg Baxter

Dialogue Editors

Stuart Copley

Christopher Assells

Glenn T. Morgan

Tony Currie

ADR Editors

Constance A. Kazmer

Bill Voightlander

Avram Gold

Jeff Watts

Foley Supervisor

Peter Sullivan

Foley Editors

Victor Iorillo

Willy Allen

Marshall Winn

Sound Recordists

Eric Batut

Matt Patterson

Music:

Shawn Murphy

ADR:

Denis Blackerby

Foley:

Nerses Gezalyan

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

ADR:

Doc Kane

Foley:

James Ashwill

Sound Effects Supervisor

Scott Martin Gershin

Sound Effects Editor

Frank Smathers

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Hilda Hodges

Technical Adviser

Fernando Parrado

Helicopter Co-ordinator/

Camera Pilot

Steven J. Wright

Avalanche Dog

Abel

Stunt Co-ordinators

Gary Hymes

Canada:

J. J. Makaro

Stunts

Brian Smrz

Charles Andre

Jim Dunn

David Jacox Jnr

James Kirk Jarrett

Mike Mitchell

Fred Perron

Tom Raudaschl

Jacob Rupp

Dawn Stofor-Rupp

Melissa Stubbs

Marc Whalen

Brent Woolsey

Connie Kennedy

Cast

Ethan Hawke

Nando Parrado

Vincent Spano

Antonio Balbi

Josh Hamilton

Roberto Canessa

Bruce Ramsay

Carlitos Paez

John Haymes Newton

Tintin

David Kriegel

Gustavo Zerbindo

Kevin Breznahan

Roy Harley

Sam Behrens

Javier Methol

Ileana Douglas

Lilliana Methol

Jack Noseworthy

Bobby Francois

Christian Meoli

Federico Aranda

Jake Carpenter

Alberto Antuna

Michael De Lorenzo

Rafael Cano

Jose Zuniga

Praga

Danny Nucci

Hugo Diaz

David Cubitt

Fito Strauch

Gian Di Donna

Eduardo Strauch

John Cassini

Daniel Fernandez

Michael Woolson

Juan Martino

Chad Willett

Pablo Montero

Richard Ian Cox

Moncho Sabella

Gordon Currie

Coche Inciarte

Ele Keats

Susana Parrado

Joshua Lucas

Felipe Restano

Silvio Pollio

Alex Morales

Nuno Antunes

Alvaro Mangino

Michael Tayles

precipice during the heroic last-reel trek across the Andes.

Despite these highs, the true story contains more characters than can easily be personalised. They spend their time simply sitting around a mountainside like sunbathers, waiting to be rescued or running the emotional gamut from insanity through fortitude and practicality to religious transportation. Despite the efforts of an excellent cast, Marshall is unable to make much of the characters (we are even unsure which of the shaggily 70s haircuts will grow to be the unbilled John Malkovich, who narrates the story in smoky close-ups). This shortcoming recalls John Carpenter's difficulties with the similarly ice-bound and gradually decimated crew of *The Thing*. When the avalanche strikes, it kills off not only the most recognisable actor and natural leader of the team (Vincent Spano) but the sole woman with a substantial role (Ileana Douglas), leaving the rest of the film bereft, as its convincingly sulky and petulant group of traumatised cannibals gradually turn to God. Eventually, the story produces a pair (Ethan Hawke, Josh Hamilton) who are less conventional take-charge heroes (cf. Hardy Kruger and James Stewart in *The Flight of the Phoenix*) than bit-players singled out at random and never elevated above their comrades except by virtue of having higher billing and more lines.

While cannibalism is still transgressive enough a subject to prompt extremely tactful treatment (nothing here like the *Andes Plane Crash Cook Book* referred to in Ted Kotcheff's *Who is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?*), Marshall and screenwriter John Patrick Shanley take pains to play down this theme and turn the thrust of the picture to religion. "If we do this, we'll never be the same again," one survivor remarks just before sawing into a frozen dead buttock with a piece of glass, only for a fellow to reply, "it's like communion - from their death, we live." The most embarrassing aspect of the film is not the rigorously suppressed black humour; even the group's pledge that the dead will allow their team-mates to eat them is convincing. But what rankles is the persistent use of clichés, and the redundant dialogue about God being all around in the mountains.

Finally, in a desperate attempt to make sense of a tragedy which stands as testament to the human spirit, Malkovich talks of the shrine to the dead erected atop the mountain and the final credits roll with sweeping views of natural beauty accompanied by Aaron Neville's 'Ave Maria'. This stirring rendition is far less moving than the earlier use, perfect in period and jarring in context, of 'The Look of Love' and 'Do You Know the Way to San Jose?' - one hummed by a feeble survivor during the first night on the mountain, the other tinnily emanating from the transistor radio as Antonio tries to find news of the rescue parties.

Kim Newman

Best of the Best 2

USA 1992

Director: Robert Radler

Certificate

18

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Picture Securities

Executive Producers

Frank Giustra

Peter E. Strauss

Producers

Peter E. Strauss

Phillip Rhee

Co-producers

Marlon Staggs

Deborah Scott

Production Co-ordinator

Betsy Chasse

Unit Production Manager

Steve Brown

Location Manager

Paul "the King"

Boydston

Cast

Eliza Rayfield

Maureen A. Arata

Assistant Directors

Hal Olofsson

Lawrence Wagner

John O. Brown III

Mike "Dallas" Dunlap

Screenplay

Max Strom

John Allen Nelson

Based on characters

created by Paul Levine

Director of Photography

Fred Tammes

Colour

DeLuxe

2nd Unit Photography

Jerry Watson

Aerial Photography

David Butler

Camera Operator

Jerry Watson

Visual Effects

Kevin O'Neill

Optical/Digital Effects

Peter Kuran

Editor

Bert Lovitt

Production Designer

Gary Frutkoff

Art Director

Bill Rea

Set Design

Colin Irwin

Set Decorator

Anna Rita Raineri

Set Dresser

Matthew R. Altman

Scenic Artists

David Snow

Robert Campbell

Philip Barnes

Craig Muzio

Tom O'Brien

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Larry Fioritto

Special Effects

Bruce Mattox

Robert Phillips

Wes Mattox

Steve DeLollis

Nikki Amorosino

Pat Domenico

Music

David Michael Frank

Music Supervisor

Steve Bedell

Music Editor

Lisa Kauppi

Songs

"World Destiny" by

Jeff Hypp, Pat Kriman,

performed by Raye

Crusader; "Paranoid",

"Je n'aime que toi"

by Nikki Van Liroop,

Praga Khan, Oliver

Adams, performed by

Angel Ice; "Down For

the Count" by Robert

Jason, performed by

Mark Yoakam;

"Guilty" by Robert

Jason, performed

by Public Nuisance;

"Willie Rise" by Robert

Jason, David Michael

Frank, performed by

Li'l D and Big C;

"Everybody Loves

A Winner" by Booker

T. James, William Bell,

performed by William

Bell; "(To Be) The Best

of the Best" by David

Michael Frank, Todd

Smallwood, performed

by Mark Free; "No Guts,

No Glory" by Robert

Jason, performed

by Jeff Steele

Choreography

George Alexander

Costume Design

Mona May

Wardrobe Supervisor

Isabella Braga McCloud

Make-up

Mindy Hall

Marina Torpin

Special Make-up Effects

Mark Shostrom

Title Design

Phill Norman

Supervising Sound Editors

Steve Flick

John Dunn

Sound Editors

Mike Chock

Dean Beville

Chuck Smith

James Christopher

Alan Bromberg

Elliot Koretz

Supervising ADR Editor

Judee Flick

ADR Editors

J. Christopher Jargo

Folmer Wiesinger

Sound Recordists

Kim Ornitz

Music:

Peter R. Kelsey

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Douglas Greenfield

Sound Re-recordists

Robert W. Glass

Richard D. Rogers

Foley Artists

Sean Rowe

Ossama Khuluki

Stunt Co-ordinator

Simon Rhee

Stunts

Chuck Picerni Snr

Chuck Picerni Jnr

Steve Hulin

Carl Ciarfallo

Billy Barton Jnr

Pete Antico

Chuck Zito

Dean Nelson

Robert Lennon

Don McGovern

Rick Kahana

Eric Miller

Kirk Beebe

Denny Pierce

Darryl Chan

Jeff Jensen

Kanin Howell

Jeffrey G. Barnett

Kurt Bryant

Steve Lambert

Gene LeBelle

David LeBelle

Vincent Lin

Eric Mansker

Steve Santosusso

Vince Deadrick Jnr

Dan Epper

Charlie Skeen

Eric Norris

Frank Lloyd

Irving Lewis

David Lea

Randy Lamb

Jerry Corker

Bob Arnold

Mark Ivie

Cast

Eric Roberts

Alex Grady

Phillip Rhee

Tommy Lee

Edan Gross

Walter Grady

Ralph Moeller

Brakus

Christopher Penn

Travis Brickley

Sonny Landham

James

Wayne Newton

Weldon

Meg Foster

Sue

Nanak Khalsa

Gatka Swordsman

Simon Rhee

Dae Han

Myung Kuo Kim

Khan

Hayward Nishioka

Sae Jin Kwon

Stephanos Mitsakaki

Stavros

Patrick Kilpatrick

Finch

John Charles Sheehan

Front Doorman

Albie Selznick

Man in Crowd

Mike Genovese

Gus

Keaton Simons

Older Boy

Betty Carvalho

Grandma

Cliff Emmich

Texas

Ken Nagayama

Yung June

Frank Salsedo

Charlie

Lionel Washington

Hammer

Matt Thomas

Soft Voice

Edward Bunker

Spotlight Operator

Claire Stansfield

Greta

Nicholas Worth

Sick Humor

David Rody

Slimy Man

Kane Hodder

Backdoor Man

Randy Gomes

Policeman

Robert Radler

Floor Manager

Harry Haus

Helicopter Pilot

Rain Ivana

Teller

Buckley Norris

Gambler

Alex Desir

Andre Marais

Melissa Holgate

Woman in Crowd

Christine Soustre

Woman in Bar

Manny Perry

Gunman in Desert

Christy Thom

Girl at Restaurant

Bob Lewis

Minister

Rusty Meyers

TV Reporter

Jonathan Strauss

Basketball Player

Jeff Olan

The original on which this sequel is loosely based was released in the wake of the Gulf War and seemed peculiarly of the moment in its expression of American malaise in the face of an alien culture. Possibly because of the absence of any legible authorial signature – director Robert Radler has a history in music videos and commercials – or indeed, of star quality on the part of its performers, this follow-up too seems most interesting when considered symptomatically, its most notable characteristic being an extreme cynicism in ensuring that it has its moral cake and eats it too.

This is in fact two films yoked together. On one hand there is the moral tale of family values, discipline, hard work, pain and dedication whose protagonist is the lithely feline Tommy Lee. It is not accidental that its protagonist is Asian and that this narrative follows most closely the generic behests of the Hong Kong martial arts fables of the late 60s and early 70s, exemplified most memorably perhaps in the films of Bruce Lee, with their tales of dispossession and moral outrage.

On the other hand there is the brutalist hymn to high-tech anarchy centred around Brakus and the Coliseum. Played by Ralph Moeller, a poor person's Schwarzenegger with a clipped German accent, the references are old-world ones, delivering the vaguest impression both of ancient Roman popular culture and corruption (the survival of the defeated depends on the public's thumbs-up or -down) and its revival in Germanic heroic myth and codes of honour.

Here though, the writer has surely erred; by this code, Brakus would surely have cherished his scar. Alex and his son thus become essentially spectators in a larger game, having no claim to the moral purity of the Asian code of values (Walter fails his black belt test) but equally being disqualified by association from claiming a brutality adequate to the other by the death of side-kick Travis.

The director is clearly determined to make the film look like a big production – despite evidence to the contrary in the tacky appearance of the extras and the threadbare locations – and more important, to *feel* like a big production, with its use of distorted sound and camera angles. But the weight of the film is loaded to support its bursts of orgiastic violence; and the notion of the martial arts contest as a metaphor for resistance struggle melts away before Weldon's frequently reiterated reminder that "the only rule is that there are no rules." The pleasure of the fight erases moral values.

The film's general moral tackiness extends to the regulation use of female characters as props for the male ego, and to the various sequences involving the child Walter. "Gee Dad, I don't need a babysitter any more," he protests at one point, before being swept off to the fight, his father's warning to "stay away from the Playboy Channel!" still ringing in his ears.

Verina Glaessner

Body of Evidence

USA 1992

Director: Uli Edel

Certificate

18

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

Dino De Laurentiis

Communications

Executive Producers

Stephen Deutsch

Melinda Jason

Producer

Dino De Laurentiis

Co-producers

Bernd Eichinger

Herman Weigel

Line Producer

Mel Dellar

Production Co-ordinator

Christine Baer

Unit Production Manager

Mel Dellar

Location Manager

Michael Neale

Post-production

Supervisor

Gary Chandler

Cast

Mary Jo Slater

Assistant Directors

Dennis Maguire

John Wildermuth

Screenplay

Brad Mirman

Director of Photography

Doug Milsome

Colour

DeLuxe

Video Supervisors

Mark Burnett

Robert Morgenroth

Editor

Thom Noble

Production Designer

Victoria Paul

Art Director

Michael Rizzo

Set Decorator

Jerie Kelter

Set Dressers

Peter Clarke

Nicholas Parker

Jim Meyer

Production Illustrator

Sherman Labby

Scenic Artists

Pat Morache

James Woods

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Dale Martin

Music

Graeme Revell

Electric Bass performed by

Eberhard Weber

Orchestrations

Graeme Revell

Tim Simonec

Music Supervisor

Stuart Boros

Music Editor

Dick Bernstein

Costume Design

Susan Becker

Costume Supervisor

Violet Cane

Make-up

Deborah Larson

Patricia Gerhardt

Madonna:

Joe Campayno

Title Design

Jay Johnson

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editors

Sandy Gendler

Val Kuklowsky

Sound Editors

Zack Davis

Noah Blough

Jon Johnson

Harry Harris

Michael Sandgren

Bill Van Dallen

Richard Marx

Sound Recordists

Keith A. Wester

Kurt St. Amant

Music

Dan Wallin

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Paul Massey

Steve Pederson

Dan Wallin

Dennis Hill

Jeff Ward

Sound Effects

John Fasal

Stunt Co-ordinator

David Ellis

Stunts

Ric Waugh

Annie Ellis

Tim Davison

Erik Rondell

Cast

Madonna

Rebecca Carlson

Willem Dafoe

Frank Dulaney

Joe Mantegna

Robert Garrett

Anne Archer

Joanne Braslow

Julianne Moore

Sharon Dulaney

Jurgen Prochnow

Dr Alan Paley

Frank Langella

Jeffrey Roston

Michael Forest

Andrew Marsh

Charles Hallahan

Dr McCurdy

Mark Rolston

Detective Reese

Richard Riehle

Detective Griffin

D. Scot Douglas

Printman

Mario DePriest

John DeLay

Technicians

Ross Huffman-Kerr

Photographer

Mark C. Vincent

Reporter

Frank Roberts

Minister

Aaron Corcoran

Michael Dulaney

Timi Pruthiere

Waitress

Corey Brunish

Jamie

Stan Shaw

Charles Biggs

Jeff Perry

Gabe

John Chandler

Dr Novaro

Lillian Lehman

Judge Burnham

Peter Paul Eastman

Jury Foreman

Bryan Clark

Clerk

9,048 feet
101 minutes

Andrew Marsh, an aged millionaire with a weak heart, dies in unusual circumstances in his Oregon mansion. His blood reveals traces of cocaine, and a video of his love-making with gallery owner Rebecca Carlson is found in his bedroom along with his corpse. Suspicion mounts when local detectives find various sex toys and Marsh's secretary Joanne Braslow announces that Carlson murdered him. Frank Dulaney, Portland's top defence lawyer, takes on Carlson's case just before assistant DA Robert Garrett files murder charges against her. Dulaney learns that Rebecca stands to inherit Marsh's \$8 million estate, but remains convinced that their relationship was based on a mutual taste for sado-masochistic sex.

When the trial opens, Garrett attempts to prove that Rebecca purposely engaged Marsh in increasingly dangerous sexual acts and laced a nasal spray with cocaine to induce a heart attack. At first, Garrett's arguments are destroyed when Dulaney reveals Joanne Braslow's former cocaine habit, her previous sexual relationship with Marsh and that he had recently reduced her share of his will in favour of Carlson. But as the trial progresses, Dulaney becomes sexually involved with Rebecca, which threatens both their professional relationship and his marriage. When Garrett proves in court that Rebecca had a previous affair with an older business tycoon with a weak heart, Dulaney is outraged by the betrayal and confronts her. Rebecca is saved, however, by her convincing testimony that she broke off with the businessman when she found him in bed with another man.

Dulaney wins the case but returns to Rebecca's houseboat that night to catch her discussing Marsh's murder with her lover Dr Alex Paley, who supplied Marsh with the fatal dose of cocaine. When Paley learns about Rebecca's affair with Frank, he shoots her in a jealous rage and the police arrive in time to arrest the killer.

"Can you really screw someone to death?" Frank Dulaney's precocious son asks his father. "Of course not," replies Frank, flinching from the accusations made against his client. But out of the mouth of babes comes wisdom. When assistant DA Garrett tells the court that Rebecca Carlson is a "ruthless, calculating woman", the question hangs in the air. According to Garrett, Rebecca's luscious body – of which the audience sees much – is as deadly as "a gun or knife". The theme of the female body as weapon is familiar territory and *Body of Evidence* offers no surprises.

An unconvincing plot, with the murder never fully explained, is further hampered by Brad Mirman's clumsy screenplay, thick with clichés and pretentious allusions to sexual liberation. While it gestures towards Madonna's role as a woman on the cutting edge of sexual expression, this posturing quickly buckles under its own contradictions. Rebecca espouses



Vamps and clamps: Madonna, Dafoe

enlightened views on sado-masochism – "have you ever seen animals make love? It's intense, it's violent but they never really hurt each other" – yet she's a manipulative harriidan. She may be an expert with nipple clamps but in the tradition of Hollywood vamps, she keeps a cold eye on her lover's bank balance.

With this sexual whirlwind whistling through their lives, neither Frank Dulaney nor Andrew Marsh can be held responsible for getting in bed with Madonna. Rebecca tells Dulaney, "I know I'm irresistible," and it's assumed that male lust knows no moral boundaries. Uli Edel's direction reinforces this antiquated notion by reducing the subtle power dynamics of sexual desire to the visual cliché of Rebecca as "dominatrix", literally the woman on top. And once again, it's difficult to separate Madonna the star from her on-screen character, whose gestures seem to have been lifted from her book *Sex*: her index finger dives below white cotton panties, there's a furtive screw in an underground parking lot and an anal rape. Neither does Willem Dafoe bring depth to these erotic scenes, although he is far more convincing with Julianne Moore as his wife Sharon.

Edel apparently intended the sex scenes to provide the film's action, which they do only by default. Since the murderer's *modus operandi* remains unclear, Garrett's revelations about Rebecca's former lovers with weak hearts have little dramatic impact. The tension is further undermined by a judge who treats the courtroom with all the gravitas becoming a diner, scolding the attorneys and reminding the spectators to "keep your rude mouths shut or get out".

While the film includes a handful of career women – the judge is a black woman, Sharon manages a smart restaurant and Rebecca owns an art gallery – it is mainly a thinly disguised exercise in male bonding. Garrett's prurient questioning of Rebecca's sexual habits, which first sends Dulaney into a fury, is later justified by her involvement in Marsh's murder. At the boathouse the two men watch Rebecca's corpse floating in the river (cf. Alex in *Fatal Attraction*) and congratulate each other on catching the real criminal. For all its reliance on contemporary debates about perversion, *Body of Evidence* indulges a depressingly narrow view of sexual relationships.

Julie Wheelwright

Un Coeur en Hiver (A Heart in Winter)

France 1991

Director: Claude Sautet

Certificate

12

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Film Par Film/Cinea/
Orly Film/Sedif/
Paravision/D.A. Films/
FR3 Films Production
With les Soficas
Sofinergie/Investimage/
Créations

With the participation
of Canal Plus and the
Centre National de
la Cinématographie

Executive Producer

Gérard Gaultier

Producers

Jean-Louis Livi
Philippe Carcassonne

Casting

Lissa Pillu

Christiane Lebrima

Pascale Beraud

Assistant Directors

Yvon Rouve
Frédéric Jardin
Natalie Engelstein
Nils Hoffet

Screenplay

Claude Sautet
Jacques Fieschi
Jérôme Tonnerre

Director of Photography

Yves Angelo

In colour

Editor

Jacqueline Thiedot

Art Director

Christian Marti

Set Decorators

Frédérique Belvaux
Thomas Chevalier
Alain Gosse
Olivier Coutagne
Thierry Golitin
Bertrand Fremaux
Philippe Silvain
Yvon Moreno
Claude Vincent
Robinson
Sophie Pons
Raymonde Moreddu

Music Director

Philippe Sarde

Music Extract

"Sonatas and Trio"

by Maurice Ravel

Music Consultants

Christophe Poiget
Carole Saint-Michel

Costume Designer

Corinne Jorry

Make-up

Thi-Loan Nguyen

Sound Editor

Marie-Thérèse Boiche

Sound Recordists

Pierre Lenoir

Jean-Paul Loublier

Sound Effects

Jérôme Levy

Consultants

Instrument-making:

Etienne Vatelot

Philippe Mahu

Cast

Daniel Auteuil

Stéphane

Emmanuelle Béart

Camille

André Dussollier

Maxime

Elisabeth Bourguine

Hélène

Brigitte Catillon

Régine

Maurice Garrel

Lachaume

Myriam Boyer

Madame Amet

Stanislas Carre de Malberg

Brice

Jean-Luc Bideau

Ostende

9,379 feet

104 minutes

Subtitles

Paris. Violin-maker Stéphane and his friend Maxime have been business partners for many years, but both now take their friendship as given and probe little into each other's lives. One day, Maxime tells Stéphane he is in love with Camille, a promising young violinist, and points her out in a cafe. Camille lives with her manager Régine, an older woman who has supported her career from the start; Maxime is leaving his already-dead marriage, and the two plan to live together. Visiting his old music teacher Lachaume at his country house, Stéphane questions him about Camille, whom he also taught; Lachaume recalls her mix of coolness and 'temperament'. Camille brings her violin to Stéphane to have a new bridge fitted. The repair complete, Stéphane and Maxime attend a private recital of hers. She is dissatisfied with the sound, but vehement that she, not the violin, is the problem. Stéphane leaves, and her tension eases.

Stéphane reports Camille's unease to his friend Hélène. In a dinner-party argument at Lachaume's, Stéphane is challenged over his reluctance to express an opinion, and Camille defends him. After initial resistance, she allows him to make further improvements to her violin. Waiting for Maxime at the workshop one evening, her attention is drawn to Stéphane, still at work, and she confesses to him that relations are fraught with the possessive Régine, who resents her relationship with Maxime. Stéphane tells Hélène he feels Camille would rather be eating out with him than with Maxime, but denies any jealousy. Stéphane visits the studio where Camille is recording; they go to a nearby bar and she questions him intensely about himself but then leaves suddenly. When Camille rings, while Maxime is showing Stéphane round the flat being prepared for him and Camille, Stéphane is powerfully affected. Camille confronts him and asks if he is avoiding her because he and Maxime are friends. He shocks her by replying that they are not friends, only partners.

Now living together, Camille and Maxime discuss for the first time the fact that she is in love with Stéphane. Going away briefly on business, Maxime phones Stéphane asking him to go to the recording studio. At the post-recording party, Camille makes Stéphane drive her away. As they stop outside a hotel, she propositions him. He rejects her, claiming to have seduced her as a game, perhaps to get at Maxime. Broken, she gets out of the car. Returning, Maxime finds Régine at the flat caring for Camille, who is drunk and deeply humiliated. Camille seeks Stéphane out at the cafe, where he is eating with Hélène; she taunts him, then pleads with him until a waiter throws her out. Maxime walks in, hits Stéphane and leaves.

Stéphane and Maxime part company. Lachaume berates Stéphane, questioning his motives; Stéphane visits Camille and she coolly accepts his

apology. Eight months pass; Stéphane has set up in a new workshop. Maxime visits, tells him that Camille has recovered, and half-heartedly suggests renewing their partnership. Stéphane and Maxime visit Lachaume, who is now terminally ill. His housekeeper Madame Amet tells Stéphane that Lachaume has been begging her to end his life but she cannot do it. Stéphane enters Lachaume's room and administers the necessary injection. Back in Paris, Stéphane discusses the loss of Lachaume with Camille. Both say they are glad to have met again. Maxime comes in to collect her and they depart, leaving Stéphane alone.

Bourgeois love and life are hardly underexplored terrain in the French cinema, and for no particular reason Claude Sautet's 40-year career has had muted-to-nonexistent impact in the UK until now. That *Un Coeur en Hiver*, his twelfth feature, has broken the mould is largely due to its deserved Silver Lion at the 1992 Venice Festival. Sautet has remarked that the structure of a film is itself musical; and the completeness of *Un Coeur en Hiver* as a virtuoso piece of filmmaking derives not merely from such high-quality ingredients as the flawless central performances but from its discernibly symphonic structure, marked by assured variations of rhythm and texture closely linked to the development of its themes.

From the familiar starting point of an emotional triangle, Sautet explores two considerably more engrossing and perplexing notions: on the one hand, a passive but consciously manipulative seduction which – in terms of sexual action – never actually 'happens', and on the other, a solid yet curiously substanceless male friendship whose very existence can suddenly be denied. As the catalyst of these disruptions, the seemingly shy and introverted Stéphane is central to the film's meanings – most crucially, as the owner of the *coeur en hiver* of the title – and the perfectly calibrated emotional shifts from scene to scene, as Sautet charts the tacit dance of pursuit and withdrawal between him and Camille, becomes a parallel investigation into the (ultimately insoluble) riddle of his true motives and emotions.

The film's opening – a detailed but oddly detached dissection by Stéphane of his friendship with Maxime – seems to set up the former as the natural focus for our sympathy, but the images accompanying his voice-over foreground the subtly different story about to unfold. A shot of Stéphane beating Maxime at squash shows a competitiveness – and taste for 'games' – very much at odds with the ultra-humility of his demeanour. When Stéphane tells us that he and Maxime "haven't spent an evening together in years" – ambiguously asserting, "it suits us both fine" – the complex pathos of the accompanying image of the former alone in his workshop at night, holding a tiny automaton of a violinist, identifies him as a withdrawn

figure for whom solitude is a form of self-protection and whose most intimate bond is with his work.

At the same time, the image of the automaton – a musician in Stéphane's hands – also suggests a power relation, both mystical and manipulative, between violin-maker and violinist. In contrast to the customary cinematic equations between swelling music and burgeoning passion, Sautet's interest is in music as work. The texture of activity in Stéphane's workshop is so tangibly evoked that you can almost smell the varnish. The satisfying rasp of a bridge being hollowed contributes as much to the musically sparse soundtrack as the strains of Ravel (though Béart, who learnt the violin specially for the film, wields the bow with astonishing conviction and emotion); and the characters' professional relationships become a channel for the expression of more intimate and intangible interactions.

Stéphane and Maxime's roles as craftsman and businessman – the one introvert and spiritual, the other extrovert and material – are established early on as denoting two entirely different ways of relating to the world. Most critically, the apparent reticence which attracts Camille to Stéphane is powerfully bound up in his mystique as an instrument-maker and her hunger for his professional approval (when he ceases turning up to watch her record, she frets about whether her playing has displeased him). Where Stéphane uses his craft as a means of protecting himself from the world and its feelings – hence his disquiet when Maxime upsets the equilibrium of their partnership by falling in love – his profession itself makes it impossible for Camille to accept his frigid front as the 'truth'. "You act as if emotions don't exist," she accuses him, "yet you love music". Stéphane in turn claims that far from concealing his feelings he is revealing his true – unfeeling – self, a stalemate which culminates in her sexual approach and his rejection.

Though Camille is right to diagnose Stéphane's 'openness' as a particularly convoluted form of concealment, the unknowable self behind it – beautifully suggested in Daniel Auteuil's paradoxically sympathetic performance – makes condemnation impossible. This carefully constructed sense of moral ambiguity is sharpened by his sudden, startling euthanasia of Lachaume – a compassionate, courageous act immoral in conventional terms, but in its context cathartic.

Emmanuelle Béart's dignity and beauty notwithstanding, the most highly charged scenes here are scattered with danger signs – cars swerve to avoid Camille and Stéphane on two occasions, and one intense interchange is conducted with another couple rowing passionately in the background. But if Sautet's symphony seems pessimistic about the fragility of human relations, it compensates with an exceptionally rich and subtle study of a freeze-dried male psyche.

Claire Monk



Heart strings: Emmanuelle Béart

Groundhog Day

USA 1993

Director: Harold Ramis

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Columbia

Executive Producer

C. O. Erickson

Producers

Trevor Albert

Harold Ramis

Associate Producer

Whitney White

Production Co-ordinator

Alecia LaRue

Unit Production Manager

C. O. Erickson

Location Managers

Bob Hudgins

2nd Unit:

Ritchie Copenhaver

2nd Unit Director

Steve Boyum

Assistant Directors

Michael Haley

John L. Roman

Sam Hoffman

Cyd Adams

2nd Unit:

J. Alan Hopkins

Gaetano "Tom" Lisi

Brian W. Boyd

Screenplay

Danny Rubin

Harold Ramis

Story

Danny Rubin

Director of Photography

John Bailey

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Directors of

Photography

James Blanford

George Kohut

Camera Operators

Michael Stone

2nd Unit:

Michael Kohnhorst

Ann Lukacs

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Editor

Pembroke J. Herring

Production Designer

David Nichols

Art Director

Peter Lansdown Smith

Set Design

Karen Fletcher-Trujillo

Set Decorator

Lisa Fischer

Special Effects

Tom Ryba

Music

George Fenton

Music Extract

"Eighteenth Variation

from Rhapsodie on a

Theme of Paganini" by

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Orchestrations

Jeff Atmajian

Music Supervisor

Sharon Boyle

Music Editor

Sally Boldt

Songs

"Weatherman"

by George Fenton,

Harold Ramis,

performed by Delbert

McClinton; "I Got You

Babe" by Sonny Bono,

performed by

Sonny and Cher;

"Pennsylvania Polka"

by Lester Lee, Zeke

Manners, performed

by Frankie Yankovic;

"Take Me Round

Again" by George

Fenton, performed

by Susie Stevens;

"You Don't Know Me"

by Eddy Arnold,

Cindy Walker,

performed by

Ray Charles; "Phil's

Piano Solo" by and

performed by Terry

Fryer; "Almost Like

Being in Love" by Alan

Jay Lerner, Frederick

Loewe, performed

by Nat King Cole

Costume Designer

Jennifer Butler

Costume Supervisor

Mike Butler

Make-up

Deborah K. Dee

Key:

Dorothy Pearl

Special Prosthetic

Make-up

Art Anthony

Title Design

Pittard/Sullivan/

Fitzgerald

Supervising Sound Editor

George H. Anderson

Sound Editors

Kevin Barlia

Ed Callahan

David Giammarco

John A. Larsen

Cindy Marty

ADR Editor

Mary Andrews

Sound Recordists

Les Lazarowitz

Music:

John Richards

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Sergio Reyes

B. Tennyson

Sebastian II

Bill W. Benton

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rick LeFevour

Stunts

Stacy Logan

Maryann Kelman

Steve Boyum

James R. Mammoser

Frank P. Calzavara

Jim McCarthy

Rudy Calzavara

Linda Perlin

Ed Fernandez

Randy Popplewell

James Fierro

Gina Reale

Glory Fioramonti

Rich Wilkie

Mark Harper

Jeffrey Martin

Williams

Animal Trainers/Handlers

Bill Hoffman

Kim Miller

Cast

Bill Murray

Phil Connors

Andie MacDowell

Rita Hanson

Chris Elliott

Larry

Stephen Tobolowsky

Ned

Brian Doyle-Murray

Buster

Marita Geraghty

Nancy

Angela Paton

Mrs Lancaster

Rick Ducommun

Gus

Rick Overton

Ralph

Robin Duke

Doris the Waitress

Carol Bivins

Anchorwoman

Willie Garson

Kenny, Phil's Assistant

Ken Hudson Campbell

Man in Hallway

Les Podewell

Old Man

Rod Sell

Groundhog Official

Tom Milanovich

State Trooper

John Watson Snr

Bartender

Peggy Roeder

Piano Teacher

Harold Ramis

Neurologist

David Pasquesi

Psychiatrist

Lee R. Sellars

Cop

Chet Dubowski

Felix, Bank Guard

Doc Erickson

Herman, Bank Guard

Sandy Maschmeyer

Phil's Movie Date

Leighanne O'Neil

Fan on Street

Evangeline Binkley

Samuel Magee

Ben Zwick

Jeopardy! Viewers

Hynden Walsh

Debbie

Michael Shannon

Fred

Timothy Hendrickson

Bill, Waiter

Martha Webster

Alice, Waitress

Angela Gollan

Piano Student

Shaun Chaiyabhat

Boy in Tree

Dianne B. Shaw

ER Nurse

Barbara Ann Grimes

Ann Heekin

Lucina Paquet

Flat Tyre Ladies

Brenda Pickleman

Buster's Wife

Amy Murdoch

Buster's Daughter

Eric Salet

Buster's Son

Lindsay Reinsch

Woman with Cigarette

Roger Adler

Guitar Player

Ben A. Fish

Bass Player

Don Rio McNichols

Drum Player

Brian Willig

Saxophone Player

Richard Henzel

Rob Riley

DJ Voices

Terry Fryer

Piano Hand Double

Scooter

The Groundhog

9,085 feet

101 minutes

Phil Connors, a cynical Philadelphia TV weatherman, is less than happy when he is despatched for the fifth time to the small town of Punxsutawney to cover the annual Groundhog Day ceremony. A snowstorm threatens too, though he predicts that it will miss the area. The great day – February 2nd – dawns and the groundhog duly emerges from its box. According to the local dignitaries, the rodent seer has predicted six more weeks of winter. Phil's idealistic producer Rita Hanson extols the town's simple virtues, but he remains unconvinced, and when the snowstorm duly materialises to prevent his departure, takes to his bed in disgust. He wakes up next morning to find that it's February 2nd again. At first he is incredulous and seeks help from Rita, from a doctor and from a psychiatrist. The next morning it happens again: it's a new day for everyone except Phil. He gets drunk and ends up in jail after driving a car down a railway track. He wakes up as usual in his guest-house bedroom. Over successive February 2nds, he uses the knowledge he is able to acquire about the town's people and events for sexual and financial gain, seducing women and robbing banks. He devises a devious plan to have his way with Rita, but it consistently fails.

Despondent, Phil steals the groundhog and commits suicide by driving off a cliff. He wakes up as usual to Sonny and Cher on the radio. Having exhausted all possible suicide routes, he manages to get Rita to understand what has happened to him and, after

they spend a glorious day together, he tells her that he loves her. Next day, she remembers nothing. After unsuccessfully trying to save the life of an old tramp, Phil starts to use his power of hindsight for the good of the community – catching falling children, performing Heimlich manoeuvres – building up a daily regime of life-saving 'chores'. One Groundhog night he goes to the post-ceremony party that he'd spurned on his first February 2nd. The townspeople treat him like a hero and Rita is so impressed she buys him for the night in a charity auction. Next morning, February 3rd dawns at last for Phil. Blissfully happy, he decides to set up house with Rita in the town he now knows so well.

Groundhog Day is that rarest of cinematic pleasures – a major studio Hollywood comedy that both delights and surprises. It's based on a story by Danny Rubin, who co-wrote the screenplay with director Harold Ramis, and although it's the original idea that is initially so startling, the inventiveness and delicacy with which it is realised are finally just as impressive. There's not much in Ramis' career to suggest a talent for subtle, character-based comedy – he started out as jokes editor of *Playboy* and went on to co-write *Animal House* and direct *Ghostbusters* (on the plus side, he also made *Caddyshack*). But that, within the framework of a very high concept, is what he delivers.

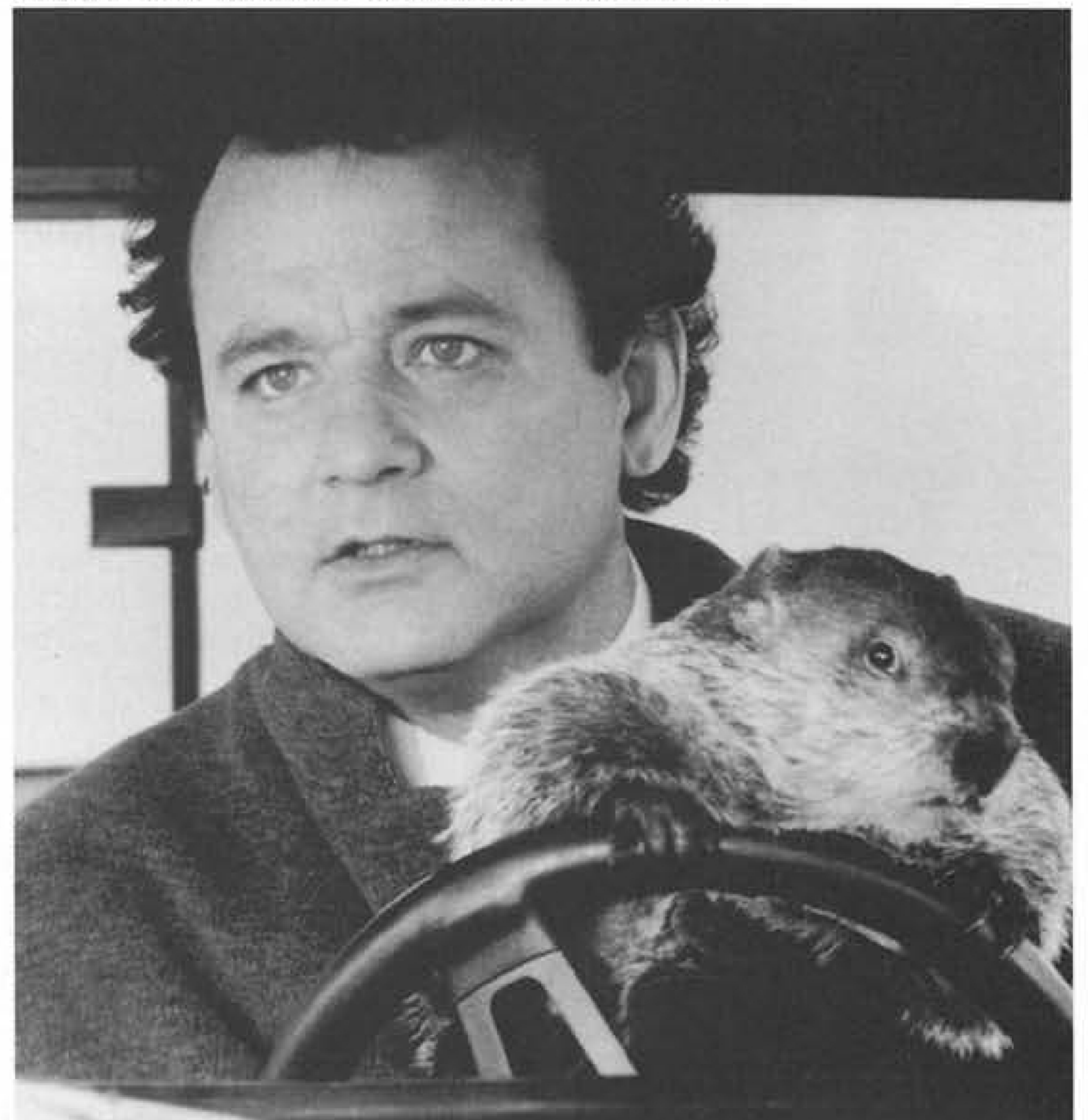
The idea of the endlessly repeating day is in fact such a high concept – if Samuel Beckett or Philip K. Dick had thought of it, they could have retired early, their work complete – that the film is in danger of catching a nose-bleed. The first repetition is crucial; too many big laughs too soon and the film would be over in its first 15 minutes.

Ramis wisely gives it time, going for chuckles rather than belly laughs. It is the gradualness of Connors' awakening to the different ramifications of his predicament that is so affecting. Bill Murray's world-weary weatherman redeemed by magic has none of the self-conscious showiness of Steve Martin's character in *L.A. Story*. Murray starts out small and expands the character to fill the space allowed, which, as it turns out, is substantial.

The scenes in which he painstakingly constructs a complete psychological profile of the object of his desire, Rita, in order to get her into bed, only to be repeatedly frustrated, are among his funniest ever. When the material is right, no one can do cheap and deep at the same time like Murray. To their credit, the supporting players never appear bored with their secondary status. Even Andie MacDowell manages to make something worthwhile out of her role as bewildered nice girl, while the townspeople seem to revel in their function as mere pawns.

The film's dark underside (Murray's repeated attempts at suicide are genuinely disturbing) ensures that its humanist message – if forced to stay long enough in the place you most hate, you could come to love it – does not leave a saccharine after-taste. Happily, the streak of misanthropy in Murray's character survives to the end. *Groundhog Day* pays lip-service to Capraesque redemption conventions, but it is refreshing that the weatherman seems to become a better person more out of boredom than anything else. In a way, this film gives the small town due restitution for the savage assaults of the Lynch-mob – instead of peeling away the gloss of a too-perfect facade, it transforms Connors' blistering contempt into admiration.

Ben Thompson



Rodent movie: Bill Murray, Scooter

Léolo

Canada 1992

Director: Jean-Claude Lauzon

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Metro Pictures

Production Company

Productions du
Verseau/Flach Film/
Le Studio Canal Plus
With the participation
of the National Film
Board of Canada
With financial
assistance from
Telefilm Canada/
Société Générale des
Industries Culturelles
(Québec)/Radio-Québec/
Super Ecran/Procirop/
Ministère de la Culture
et de la
Communication

Executive Producers

Aimée Danis
Claudette Viau

Producers

Lyse Lafontaine
Aimée Danis

Co-Producers

Isabelle Fauvel
Jean-François Lepetit

Line Producer

NFB:
Léon G. Arcand

Associate Producer

NFB:
Doris Girard

Production Co-ordinator

Lucie D'Amour

Production Managers

Pierre Laberge
France:
Serge Ménard

Italy:
Tommasco Calevi

Unit Managers

Lucie Bouliane
Italy:
Livia Leto

Carla Pettini
Carla Colaci

Location Managers

Marie-France Caron
Kirk Finken
Italy:
Flaviana Ferri

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Marie-France Caron

Casting

Lucie Robitaille
Italy:
Umberto Angelucci

Assistant Director

Jacques W. Benoît

Screenplay

Jean-Claude Lauzon

Director of Photography

Guy Dufaux
In colour

Opticals

Pierre Provost
Jimmy Chin
Michael Cleary

Editor

Michel Arcand

Art Director

François Séguin

Set Decorators

Frances Calder
André Chamberland

Special Effects

L'Intrigue
Peter & Peter
Lucraft Inc

Songs

"Cold Cold Ground",
"Temptation" by
and performed by
Tom Waits; "Alleluia"
performed by Sister
Marie Keyrouz; "Spem
in Alium" by Thomas
Tallis, performed
by The Tallis Scholars;
"L'Orange" by Gilbert
Bécaud, Pierre
Delanoë, performed
by Gilbert Bécaud;
"You Can't Always Get
What You Want" by
Mick Jagger, Keith
Richards, performed
by The Rolling Stones;
"Gloria" by Ariel
Ramirez; "The Lady of
Shallott" by Loreenna
McKennit; "Prelude
in Tchahargah" by
Mahmoud Tabrizi
Zadeh; "Song of
Complaint" by
Antranik Askarian,
Khatchaturian;
"Sabhuya" by Bangal

Costume Designer

François Barbeau

Wardrobe

Denise Lemieux

Head Make-up Artist

Jackie Reynal

Titles

Val Teodori

Sound Designer

Richard Martin

ADR Supervisors

Jacques Plante

Sound Recordists

Yvon Benoit

Italy:

Roberto Alberghini

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Hans Peter Strobl

Sound Effects

Marcel Pothier

Foley

France:
Jean-Pierre Lelong

Cast

Maxime Collin

Léolo

Ginette Reno

Mother

Julien Guimard

Grandfather

Pierre Bourgault

The Word Tamer

Giuditta del Vecchio

Bianca

Andrée Lachapelle

Psychiatrist

Denys Arcand

Career Adviser

Germain Houde

Teacher

Yves Montmarquette

Fernand

Lorne Brass

Fernand's enemy

Roland Blouin

Father

Geneviève Samson

Rita

Marie-Hélène Montpetit

Nanette

Francis Saint-Onge

Léolo, age six

Alex Nadeau

Fernand, age 16

Louis Grenier

Gynaecologist

Richard Guèvremont

Geography Teacher

Eric Cadorette

Little Godin

Aaron Tager

Fishmonger

Luc Séguin

Latourelle

Simon Gosselin

Paquette

Luc Proulx

Fisher

Catherine Lemieux

Régina

Nick Fasano

Italian Salesman

Jade Landry Cuerrier

Young Nanette

Magalie Beaugregard

Young Rita

Simon Lavigne

Baby

Amedeo Carlo Mangiu

Tommaso

Maria Petraglia

Contadina

Salvator Giuffrida

Umberto

Mikael Baillargé-

Lafontaine

Diver

Gilbert Sicotte

Narrator

9,630 feet

107 minutes

Subtitles

Living with his family in a squalid East Montreal tenement, a French Canadian boy, Léo Lauzon, keeps detailed notes of his thoughts and experiences. Inventing a new name – Léolo Lozone – and a less mundane background for himself, he imagines that he was conceived in Sicily, by an accident involving a tomato. Fascinated by one of his neighbours, Bianca, an Italian teenager, he secretly plans that they will escape back to Italy one day and shake off Léolo's eccentric relatives for good. His father, a foundry-worker, has for years been obsessed with the family's bowel movements, and Léolo recalls spending many hours of his infancy striving for satisfactory results. His brother Fernand, terrorised by a local bully, devotes himself to body-building exercises, while his sisters, Nanette and Rita, pay lengthy visits to the psychiatric ward of the local hospital. Léolo's mother, a copious source of affection, maintains the household routine although perplexed by her family's behaviour. Once, when Léolo's grandfather attempted to drown him in a paddling pool, she saved the boy by knocking the old man down with a frying pan.

Léolo's notebooks, discarded when full, are discovered by the Word Tamer, a white-haired academic who, possibly in Léolo's imagination, takes an interest in him and attempts, without success, to make his mother and his schoolteacher aware of his writing talent. Spying on Bianca as she bathes his grandfather and teasingly yields to the old man's pleas for other services, Léolo becomes sexually aware and learns to masturbate, occasionally with the aid of raw meat borrowed from the larder. Assisting Fernand, he goes diving in the nearby harbour, collecting fishing tackle snagged among the underwater rubbish and selling it back to the anglers. One day they again meet the bully, who is unaware of Fernand's new muscle-power; Léolo is sadly disillusioned when his brother, after years of preparing for this moment of revenge, still refuses to fight and gets beaten up.

Léolo decides to kill his grandfather, and lowers a noose around his neck when he is in the bath. Unfortunately the arrangement of ropes and pulleys gives way and the boy is felled by a plunging counterweight. In hospital, he fends off the psychiatrist's interrogations and takes refuge in his writing. His fantasies intensify and he sees Bianca calling to him from beyond a blaze of light, a doorway into Sicily.

Released from hospital, he wanders with a gang of unruly kids, experimenting with drugs and sex until, after an encounter with a prostitute, Regina, he is convinced that Bianca has decided to punish him. He follows through the door of light and looks for her in the Sicilian countryside, while his comatose body, unaffected by shock treatment, is transferred to the asylum with the rest of his family. The Word Tamer completes his reading and places Léolo's manuscript reverently among his archive of books and artworks.

Steering an uneasy course between broad farce and cathartic autobiography, Lauzon's second film (after *Un Zoo la nuit*, similarly about a stress-racked family) reinvents an unstable childhood. The enigmatic Léolo, whose thoughts are committed to paper and voice-over in authoritatively adult tones, recognises at an early age that the creeping insanity with which his grandfather has infected the generations will eventually embrace him as well, and takes evasive action by dreaming up a new identity. There are in fact three Léolos: the unprincipled delinquent pursuing every vice on his descent into hell, the innocent idealist increasingly graced with visions of light and perfection, and the scribbling raconteur whose command of language and poetry might yet produce the great French-Canadian novel. Jumbling them together, a compendium of the outrageous, the bizarre and the picaresque, Lauzon crosses *Pixote* with *Amarcord*, steals a repugnantly amusing episode from *Portnoy's Complaint*, and imparts a transient grandeur to the whole experience with a liturgical soundtrack of choral works performed by (among others) Tibetan voices and Ethiopian musicians.

"My family were characters from fiction," says Léolo, performed with tolerable impassivity by 12-year-old Maxime Collin, and "I was a spectator of my own life." Absolved in this way from any claims to historical or behavioural accuracy, his reminiscences broadly follow an uneven path from infancy to puberty, pausing for moments of the especially absurd and punctuated by unheralded bursts of the unreal. The majority of such episodes occur either in the bathroom or in the asylum: the straining toddler supervised both by his cheering mother and – inexplicably – by a turkey in the adjacent bathtub, the jar of horseflies presented to Léolo's sister when she is tied to her bed in the psychiatric ward, the grandfather suspended struggling above his bathwater with a rope around his throat, the disquietingly entranced and uncaring Léolo floating in ice-cubes as if in readiness for the morgue. The liquidity of his life, launched by an early glimpse of the boy urinating from a snowy balcony, flows sluggishly through the film: the instant when, near-drowning, he discovers a treasure-trove at the bottom of his paddling pool is the preface



Wild child: Maxime Collin

to his underwater adventures in the polluted harbour and to his frozen incarceration in the asylum. These aquatic allegiances suggest a biographical authenticity, and it's no surprise to learn that Lauzon, whose past accomplishments include being a bush pilot and a forest guide, is also an obsessive scuba-diver – but they leave the other elements of his background stranded and one-dimensional.

In tribute, one suspects, not so much to his own parent as to a mother-figure for Quebec in general, Lauzon casts popular Canadian singer Ginette Reno as the matriarch of Léolo's clan. An ample and benevolent figure generously played as caricature, she is underserving of the crude intrusion of a camera between her thighs, although once she has impiously misused a book to prop up a table, this is all Lauzon evidently feels his mother is worth. His primary reverence is for his former tutor, the politician Pierre Bourgault, who wanders meaningfully through the film in appreciation of Léolo's finer flights of composition so that, no matter how repelled we may be by the scenes of the boy as voyeur or the tragic incident with the cat (from which Lauzon cuts hastily but unparadoxically to a crucifix), we don't lose sight of the exceptional talent being displayed.

This is by contrast with Léolo himself, who dumps his notebooks in the rubbish bin as soon as all the pages are filled. The odd conclusion to the in-built accolades is that the unnamed professor (credited somewhat ambiguously as the Word Tamer) in turn consigns Léolo's manuscript to dusty oblivion in the vaults of his capacious museum; this would appear to mean that as the boy is in the asylum in body and has gone to Taormina in spirit, no further Lauzon masterpieces are to be expected, at least about his now-defunct childhood. Depending on our levels of tolerance for scatological humour even when it is expressed with eye-catching originality, we might view this prospect with guarded enthusiasm.

Philip Strick

Ein Lied für Beko (A Song For Beko)

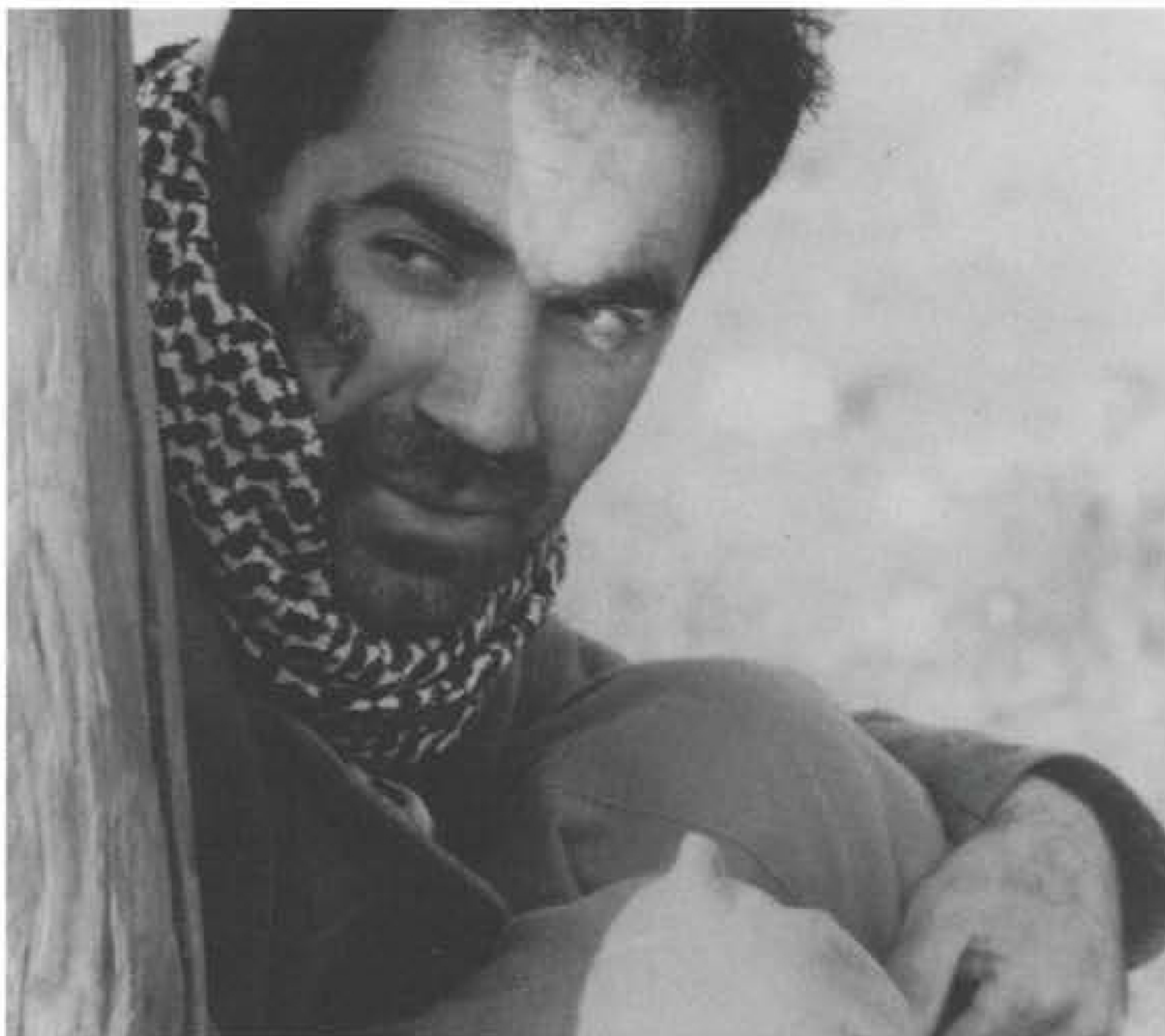
Germany/Armenia 1992

Director: Nizamettin Ariç

Certificate	Cast
Not yet issued	Nizamettin Ariç
Distributor	Beko
ICA	Bêzara Arsen
Production Company	Zinê
Margarita Woskanian	Lusika Hesen
Filmproduction	Zeyno
In co-production	Cemalê Jora
with WDR/The First	Cemal
Independent Armenian	Fila Tital
Filmproduction	Nuriyê Tital
Supported by	Temurê Jora
Kuratorium Junger	Şirinê Sinco
Deutscher Film/Film	Xasêa Rizzo
Fonds Hamburg/	Berivana Feqî
Filmstiftung NW	Leylêa Guhar
Producer	Rustemê Cemal
Margarita Woskanian	Children
Unit Manager	Arsen Poladow
Hamburg:	Agîtê Cimo
Margit Klotz	Rîzgoyê Reşit
Screenplay	Aschot Abrahamian
Nizamettin Ariç	Galina Novenz
Christine Kernich	Aschot Yedingarian
Director of Photography	Fuat Saka
Thomas Mauch	People from Berroj and
In colour	Orte Çîiya
Editors	Kurds in Hamburg
Gaby Wragge	Red Army Soldiers
Susann Lahaye	
Kerstin Kexel	9,000 feet
Set Dressers	100 minutes
Nizamettin Ariç	
Cemalê Jora	Subtitles
Music	
Nizamettin Ariç	Kurdish title:
Wardrobe	Klamek Ji bo Beko
Nizamettin Ariç	
Christine Kernich	
Make-up	
Christine Kernich	
Sound Recordist	
Ernst Marell	
Sound Re-recordist	
Arri Contrast	
Sound Effects	
Heinz Heppner	

● Beko Oztürk, a Kurdish refugee in Hamburg, recalls the events that brought him to Germany. In 1988 he was living in Suruç, a village in Turkish Kurdistan; his wife had died for lack of a doctor while he was doing military service with the Turkish army. His younger brother Cemal decided to become a *peshmerga* (guerrilla) rather than do military service, and fled the village for Iraqi Kurdistan. Soon after, the village was raided by Turkish soldiers, who vandalised property and took Beko hostage against Cemal's surrender. But Beko managed to escape during a *peshmerga* raid on the army convoy. He trekked to the Euphrates and crossed into Syria, where he was taken in by an encampment of Iraqi Kurd refugees from the Iran-Iraq war.

Beko wanted to find Cemal, but the local *peshmerga* refused to guide him into the Iraqi war zone, and so he settled into the community, using his talents as a singer-storyteller to educate the children (many of them orphans) and entertain the adults. He gave especial attention to Zinê, a small girl unable to accept her father's death. When news came of the Iran-Iraq ceasefire, some in the camp chose to return to their home village in Iraq, despite the risk of renewed attacks from Saddam Hussein's army. Zinê



Sing a serious song: Nizamettin Ariç

went with them, and so Beko tagged along, only to witness an Iraqi poison gas attack on the village. He managed to carry the blinded Zinê to safety, but everyone else died.

In Hamburg, Beko, airlifted out with Zinê by the UNHCR, prays that she can have her sight restored. At a Newroz (Kurdish New Year) party for fellow exiles he meets Kazo, who tells him what happened to Cemal: he was caught en route to Iraq and inducted into the Turkish army, and then shot dead by Kazo himself when he was forced to take part in a raid on a Kurdish village. According to Kazo, everyone in Suruç has been massacred.

● *A Song for Beko* picks up where Yilmaz Güney left off in *Yol*, with the Turkish government's persecution of its Kurdish minority, and brings the story of the continuing Kurdish struggle for territorial and cultural autonomy up to date with accounts of Saddam Hussein's efforts to exterminate the Iraqi Kurds and the enforced dispersal of Kurds into exile. The film – the first ever made in Kurdish, a language banned in both Turkey and Iraq – is an explicit plea for wider international recognition of Kurdish national identity and of the case for a purely Kurdish state. Nizamettin Ariç, the actor-musician who debuts here as director, is arguing from bitter first-hand experience: he was a popular singer (and two-time movie actor) in Turkey until he served a short jail term for using the Kurdish language in public, and has been exiled in Berlin since 1981. He shot most of his film in Armenia, which has its own large community of Kurdish refugees, with help from many other exiles and from German supporters including cinematographer Thomas Mauch, best known for his collaborations with Werner Herzog.

The film's political case is irrefutable, and the project commands respect as an extremely honourable attempt to push the Kurdish question higher on the world's agenda. The sur-

prise is that the film is equally strong as cinema. Like Güney before him, Ariç has learned the value of images over words, silence over rhetoric. A storyline with obvious risks of degenerating into sentimentality and crude nationalism (a blinded orphan girl, massacred communities, Beko's final discovery of the fate of his brother) is handled with enough dignity and emotional reserve to steer it away from melodrama; the dominant tone is elegiac regret, not hyped-up outrage. It helps that the film centres not on a firebrand radical but on a thoroughly unexceptional man and shows him finding a role for himself not as a *peshmerga* guerrilla but as a teacher and surrogate father. Beko, we learn, didn't even resist military service in the Turkish army; when we see the orphaned children taught to recite "We are Kurdish and we live in Kurdistan" in their makeshift classroom in the Syrian hills, the scene is shot from Beko's point of view, making it less a didactic gesture than a psychological insight into the mind of a man with no clear sense of his self.

Ariç and Mauch strike a well-judged balance between close-ups and long-shots. The film frequently offers wide-angle views of landscapes, not only stressing the precariousness of the tiny human settlements that dot them but also expressing the pitiful closeness of these people to their inhospitable land. The close-ups are mostly faces, silently registering everything from despair to resilience; in so far as the film holds out hope for the Kurds, that hope is in these faces. The most memorable face of all is that of the boy Yusuf, who saw his mother die in a bomb-blast while she was fetching water from the village well. When Beko encourages the orphans to define themselves by doing things that he will remember, Yusuf sings the "serious song" that gives the film its title: a haunting lament for the fate of the Kurds, sung in an adult register that he can only have learned from his dead father.

Tony Rayns

Mr Nanny

USA 1992

Director: Michael Gottlieb

Certificate	Songs
PG	"Rough Stuff" by David Johansen, Brian Koonin, performed by Buster Poindexter;
Distributor	"Dream Dad" by David Johansen, Brian Koonin, performed by Emily Bindiger;
Entertainment	"Attitude Dude" by David Johansen, Brian Koonin, performed by M.C. 12 Steps; "I Don't Wanna Go to School" by David Johansen, Brian Koonin, performed by Doghouse; "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" performed by Terry "Hulk" Hogan;
Production Company	"Speed Bonnie Boat" performed by Madeline Zima; "Foaming at the Mouth" by Casey Orr, Harden Harrison, Mike Scaccia, Bruce Corbitt, performed by Rigor Mortis; "The Train" by Brian O'Neal, performed by Black Bart; "Neighbors" by and performed by Lance Matthew
Entertainment Film	Costume Design
Executive Producers	Marianna
Benni Korzen	Astreom-De Fina
Michael Harpster	Costume Supervisor
Executive in charge of Production	Katie Evans
Joseph Fineman	Make-up
Producer	Diane Maurno
Bob Engelman	Cheri Montesanto-Medcalf
Associate Producer	Title Design
Carla Fry	Title House
Production Controller	Aspect Ration Design
Paul Prokop	Sound Design
Production Co-ordinator	Ben Wilkins
Elayne Keratsis	Supervising Sound Editor
Unit Production Manager	Marc D. Fishman
Bob Engelman	Supervising ADR Editor
Location Managers	C.M. Speakman
Liz Elwell	Sound Recordist
Beverly Vistacion	Henri Lopez
Post-production	ADR Recordist
Supervisor	Jeff Vaugn
Pam Winn	Foley Recordist
Casting	Brian Geer
Fern Cahpion	Dolby stereo consultant:
Mark Paladini	Thom Ehle
Voice:	Sound Re-recordists
Barbara Harris	Ken Teaney
Assistant Directors	Scott Ganary
Nelson Cabrera	Foley Artists
Gary Sales	Vince Nicastro
Kevin A. Williams	Greg Barbanell
John P. Tuttell	Stunt Co-ordinator
Screenplay	Artie Malesci
Edward Rugoff	Stunts
Michael Gottlieb	Tom Bahr
Director of Photography	Chick Bernhardt
Peter Stein	Dennis Deveaugh
In colour	Alex Edlin
Camera Operators	Phil Hoelcher
Michael McGowan	Robert Paisley
John Elton	Felipe Savahge
Steadicam Operator	Nathan Taylor
Bill Papp	Jim Vickers
Optical Effects	
Title House	
Huck Penzell	
Editors	
Earl Ghaffari	
Michael Ripp	
Production Designer	
Don De Fina	
Art Director	
Jose Duarte	
Set Decorator	
Barbara Peterson	
Set Dresser	
Mark Dane	
Storyboard Artist	
Alex Tavoularis	
Special Effects	
Co-ordinator	
J.B. Jones	
Special Effects	
Marc Banich	
Robert Cates	
Bruce E. Merlin	
Wire Effects	
Robert Harman	
James Lenehan	
Roy Weatherley	
Weapon Effects	
John F. Patterson	
Music	
David Johansen	
Brian Koonin	
Music Extracts	
"Nutcracker Suite" by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, performed by The Bavarian Radio Symphony; "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, performed by The Berlin Chamber Orchestra	
Music Supervisor	
David Chackler	
Music Editor	
Chris McGeary	

Cast
Terry "Hulk" Hogan
 Sean Armstrong
 Sherman Hemsley
 Burt Wilson
 Austin Pendleton
 Alex Mason Snr
 Robert Gorman
 Alex Mason Jr
 Madeline Zima
 Kate Mason
 Raymond O'Connor
 Frank Olsen
 Mother Love
 Corinne
 David Johansen
 Tommy Thanatos
 Afa Anoa'i "Alfa"
 Himself
 Brutus Beefcake
 Himself
 Butch Brickell
 Phone Man
 James Coffey
 Repo Man
 Dondi Dahlin
 Receptionist
 Dennis Deveaugh
 Joe Hess
 John F. Hoyer
 David Mandel
 Guards

Kelly Erin-Welton
 Nanny
 Danny Fotou
 Joshua Santiago
 Bullies
 Peter Kent
 Wolfgang
 Artie Malesci
 Skipper
 Marc Mercury
 Security Guard
 Sandy Mielke
 Principal
 Jeff Moldovan
 Jocko
 Fred Orstein
 Cabbie
 Darci Osiecky
 Teacher
 Jen Sung Oterbridge
 Kojiro
 Hope Pomerance
 Secretary
 Timothy A. Powell
 Lieutenant
 George "The Animal"
 Steele
 Himself

7,516 feet
84 minutes

Sean Armstrong, a former professional wrestler, is persuaded by his old ex-manager Burt Wilson to act as bodyguard for the children of inventor Alex Mason, despite his avowed dislike of children. Mason fears that they will be kidnapped by psychotic criminal genius Tommy Thanatos, intent on procuring Mason's company's newest microchip, one integral to the guidance of the new Peace-maker anti-missile device. Temporarily forced to act as nanny as well as bodyguard, Sean is beset by the children's attempts to drive him off with a series of boobytraps involving tripwires, bowling balls and electrocutions. Despite their violent machinations, Sean recognizes that they are only desperate for attention, even if only the punitive variety. Gradually, he comes to win their love and respect by demonstrating toughness, tenacity and a willingness to wear a tutu. Despite his vigilance, Thanatos manages to kidnap first Mason and then the children and Burt, demanding that Sean bring the microchip in exchange for the hostages. Sean discovers the hide-out, and with the help of Burt and the whole family, Thanatos and his henchmen are vanquished. Sean

bids an affectionate farewell to the family, and attempts to ride off on his motorcycle, but the children's last practical joke keeps him behind.

Tightly packed into his matching denim shirt and jeans, dense moustache a-bristle, his tanned body pumped to perfection and lovingly fetishised by the camera, Hulk Hogan's persona in *Mr Nanny* more closely approximates the gay love objects in Tom of Finland's illustrations than the resolute heterosexuality of Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Kindergarten Cop*, which the film desperately tries to evoke. The film conflates the current Tough-Man-made-New-Man theme with a *Home Alone*-style slapstick plot, the ingenious children pitting their lilyputian wits against the impervious body of the adult man. The final plot solution reconstitutes a new nuclear family, after both Hulk's and the father's sentimental re-education, spurred by a villain who mocks "the family I never had and never wanted".

So far, so straight. However, a number of surface elements cheekily conspire to produce a potentially gay subtext: the dress code cited above (extending as far as cross-dressing), the emphasis on male bonding, the prevalence of sado-masochism, and an endearing sense of camp self-mockery which reaches its apotheosis in a flashback sequence to when all the balding male protagonists once had resplendent heads of hair. Most importantly, the failure to provide any significant female love interest over the age of consent necessitates the creation of an unconventional two-male-parent-plus-children family unit at the film's close. *My Two Big Daddies and the Muscle Academy* would have been a more apt title.

Without reading against the grain, *Mr Nanny* is a banal exercise in low-budget comedy, its best jokes stolen from Tex Avery and the *Little Rascals* series. A 'perverse' reading, however, is more fun. The homoerotic subtext would suggest that Hollywood in the Clinton era is rethinking the premises of, as one character puts it, "your average American dysfunctional family".

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Mr Saturday Night

USA 1992

Director: Billy Crystal

Certificate

15

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

Castle Rock

Executive Producers

Lowell Ganz

Babaloo Mandel

Producer

Billy Crystal

Co-producer

Peter Schindler

Production Co-ordinators

Lisa Lynn Kearsley

Jane Raab

Production Manager

Kelly Van Horn

Location Managers

Huw Davis

Lauren Ross

NY:

Donna Bloom

2nd Unit Director

Peter Schindler

Casting

Pam Dixon

Assistant Directors

Jim Chory

David Cass Jr

Sean Hobin

Julie Bloom

John Gallagher

Screenplay

Billy Crystal

Lowell Ganz

Babaloo Mandel

Director of Photography

Don Peterman

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Photography

Gabor Kover

Camera Operator

Keith Peterman

Steadicam Operator

Randy Nolen

24 Frame Video

Steve Austin

Graphic Artist

Arthur Gelb

Editor

Kent Beyda

Production Designer

Albert Brenner

Art Directors

Carol Winstead Wool

John Kasarda

Set Design

Harold Fuhrman

Set Decorators

Kathe Klopp

Roberta Holinko

Set Dressers

John Maxwell

Ross Harpold

Matt Furginson

Bonnie Bennetts

Jess Anscott

Kevin Coyle

Wayne Fisher

Frank Flores

Illustrator

Leon Harris

Special Effects Supervisor

Dave Kelsey

Special Effects

Steve Kirshoff

John Ottesen

Music

Marc Shaiman

Music Director

Artie Kane

Orchestrations

Mark McKenzie

Additional:

Brad Dechter

Thom Sharp

Music Producers

Marc Shaiman

Hummie Mann

Music Supervisors

Scott Stambler

Hummie Mann

Songs

"I Want to Hold Your Hand" by John Lennon,

Paul McCartney;

"Roumania, Roumania" by and

performed by Aaron

Lebedeff; "Amateur

Night Tango" by

Marc Shaiman, Lester

Wilson; "Hey There"

by Richard Adler,

Jerry Ross; "Moonlight

Serenade" by Glenn

Miller, Mitchell Parish;

"Fantastic, That's You"

by George Cates, Mort

Greene, Bob Thiele,

performed by Louis

Armstrong; "Night

Fever", "Stayin' Alive"

by Barry Gibb, Maurice

Gibb, Robin Gibb;

"Daddy's Little Girl"

by Bobby Burke, Horace

Gerlach; "The Patty

Duke Theme"

by Robert Welles,

Sid Ramin; "Ain't

Misbehavin'" by

Thomas "Fats" Waller,

Harry Brooks, Andy

Razaf, performed by

Benny Goodman

Sextet; "This Could

Be the Start of

Something"

by Steve Allen

Choreography

Lester Wilson

Costume Design

Ruth Myers

Costume Supervisors

Linda Henrickson

Chuck Velasco

Irene Ferrari

Make-up

Peter Montagna

Bill Farley

Steve LaPorte

Artists:

Todd McIntosh

Richard Alonzo

Neal Martz

Joe Campayno

Michael Laudati

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Grieve

Sound Editors

Stu Bernstein

Robert Sephton

Steve Mann

Michael Dressel

Dialogue:

Rich Steven

Sherman Waze

Supervising ADR Editor

Jessica Gallavan

ADR Editor

Jonathan Klein

Supervising Foley Editor

John Murray

Sound Recordists

Jeff Wexler

Matt Patterson

Music:

Joel Moss

ADR Recordists

Bob Deschaine

David Jobe

Foley Recordists

Jim Ashwill

Nerses Gezalayan

THX Sound

Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Alicia Stevenson

Rabbinical Consultant

Rabbi Gilbert Kollin

Yiddish/Dialogue Coach

Bernard Hiller

Set Relaxer

Cheryl Moorhouse

Stunt Co-ordinator

Brian Burrows

Cast

Billy Crystal

Buddy Young Jr

David Paymer

Stan Yankelman

Julie Warner

Elaine

Helen Hunt

Annie

Mary Mara

Susan

Jerry Orbach

Phil Gussman

Ron Silver

Larry Meyerson

Sage Allen

Mom

Jason Marsden

Abie, age 15

Michael Weiner

Stan, age 18

Larry Gelman

Mr Gimbel

Kay Freeman

Mrs Gimbel

Howard Mann

Julius Branca

Stage Managers

Liz Georges

Script Girl

William Wendell

Announcer

Hartley Haverly

Susan, age 6

Will Jordan

Ed Sullivan

Josh Byrne

Abie, age 6

Ben Diskin

Stan, age 9

Irving Wasserman

Uncle Moe

Phil Forman

Uncle Julius

Joe Shea

MC

Michael Ben-Edward

Fat Man in Audience

Jackie Gayle

Gene

Carl Ballantine

Freddie

Slappy White

Joey

Richard Mehana

Sidney

Mark Lonow

Producer

Conrad Janis

Director

Tim Russ

Assistant Director

Marc Shaiman

Lucky Zindberg

Cantor Chayim Frenkel

Cantor at Funeral

Jan Lucas

Karen

Daniel Tisman

Reece

Peter Kim

Greg Paik

friend, Phil, who offers to represent him. At first, he doesn't get along with Annie, a junior agent that Phil has assigned him, but soon warms to her. She gets him work as a warm-up comedian and in a TV commercial, but he upsets his clients by not sticking to their briefs. Buddy persuades Stan to help him rehearse for an audition for a major movie; they arrive at Buddy's reading in good spirits, only to be told that the role has gone to Walter Matthau instead. Buddy is devastated and has a big argument with Stan, who leaves, telling him that he should accept who he is and show more consideration for the people who love him. Upon reflection, Buddy makes peace with his daughter, while Elaine is pleased with the new Buddy who is finally happy with himself. Some time later, Stan turns up at one of Buddy's low-key shows with a reconciliation present: a picture he has painted of the two brothers performing a double act.

Billy Crystal's debut as director – which he also produced, starred in and co-wrote – has at its centre the fictional comedian he originally created for the HBO comedy special *A Comic's Line*, and who later graduated onto *Saturday Night Live*. The premise of a once-successful comedian of the old guard trying to make a living while maintaining his dignity in the heartless 90s is promising material for the movies, but much of the treatment borders on the risible or the dull.

Despite featuring a host of characters who deserve our attention, the film chooses to concentrate on the relationship between Buddy and his brother Stan. But as we see the film predominantly through Buddy's eyes, even the complexity of Stan's character becomes evident only when it is too late to make the movie interesting. For the same reason, the women in Buddy's life remain as alien to us as they are to him. All we are left with is

Buddy himself, who, despite his amusement value as a stand-up comic, is not an interesting enough character to carry the movie alone. The story seems to have been generated from the need to develop the character beyond Crystal's original live performances, rather than the other way round.

Another reason why it is hard to get sufficiently involved in Buddy's story is that the majority of the film is played by Crystal made up as an old man. However convincing his performance and make-up, we are always aware that we are watching the youthful Crystal's performance. This transformation works much better in the less familiar face of David Paymer who plays Stan.

The film is also much too long, and tedium sets in when it becomes apparent that after an hour spent setting up Buddy's past, we must now bear witness to another hour of Buddy's attempts to sort out his future. If these two aspects had been interwoven right from the start, it could have made for a more dynamic movie. The editing too is often shoddy, as becomes especially apparent with the cut-aways of people laughing appreciatively at Buddy's jokes – which would no doubt have been funnier if we weren't told exactly where and how much to laugh. Fifteen minutes before the end, everything suddenly starts to find its resolution, despite all previous signs to the contrary: Buddy makes peace with his daughter (by handing her a cheque for \$13,000), his wife sees a new man in him, and his brother gives him an excellent painting proving his worth as an artist in his own right.

The film's most successful feature – its jokes – must have been present in Crystal's original stage performances, and it's hard not to wonder what prompted him to equip his character with such a miserable existence. This is a not entirely unamiable directorial debut, but it is a very unsatisfying one.

Martin Wagner

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Timothy Forder

Certificate
12

Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment

Production Company
First Standard Media

Executive Producer
Mary Swindale

Producer
Keith Hayley

Associate Producer
Mark Crowdy

Production Associates
Jo Gilbert

Production Co-ordinator
Jeremy Woolf

Production Co-ordinator
Kirsten Withers

Production Manager
Pete Dumont

Location Manager
Helene Lenszner

Assistant Directors
Rob Done

Screenplay
Omar Madha

Director of Photography
Timothy Forder

Based on the unfinished novel by Charles Dickens

Director of Photography
Martin McGrath

Colour
Metrocolor

Rostrum Photography
Lyndon Pickersgill

Steadicam Operator
John Ward

Editor
Sue Alhadeff

Production Designer
Edward Thomas

Special Effects Supervisor
Brian Smithies

Special Effects
Robert Bromley

Costume Designer
Ian Scoones

Drood Corpse
Colin Shulver

Music
Kick Production

Music performed by
The Chilingirian Quartet

Vocal/Saxophone:
Joanna Neale

Robert Powell's Voice:
John Bowen

Gemma Craven's Voice:
Sally Ann Triplett

Piano:
Harry Bickett

Costume Designer
Justine Luxton

Costume Supervisor
Heather Joiner

Wardrobe
Charlotte Sewell

Make-up
Designer:

Catherine Davies

Artists:
Kirstin Chalmers

Kezia De Winne

Sound Editor

Peter Corley

Sound Recordist

Geoff Neate

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Henry Dobson

Ian Selwyn

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rocky Taylor

Cast

Robert Powell

John Jasper

Nanette Newman

Mrs Crisparkle

Gemma Craven

Miss Twinkleton

Jonathan Phillips

Edwin Drood

Rupert Rainsford

Neville Landless

Michelle Evans

Helena Landless

Rosemary Leach

Mrs Tope

Finty Williams

Rosa

Ronald Fraser

Dean

Glyn Houston

Grewgious

Peter Pacey

Septimus Crisparkle

Andrew Sachs

Durdles

Freddie Jones

Sapsea

Kate Williams

Opium Woman

Marc Sinden

Honeythunder

Barry Evans

Bazzard

Delia Lindsay

Nun's Maid

Ken Wynne

Tope

Leonard Kirby

Deputy

Don McCorkindale

Watchman

Nabila Khashoggi

Sapsea's Maid

Geoff Loynes

Wagon Driver

Gareth Arnold

Choirboy

Emma Healey

Crisparkle's Maid

David Homewood

Minor Canon

Rocky Taylor

Head Ruffian

10,079 feet

112 minutes

John Jasper, choirmaster of Cloisterham Cathedral and a secret opium addict, is obsessed with Rosa, the fiancée of his nephew Edwin Drood. Concealing his jealousy behind a mask of devotion to his nephew, he pretends to encourage the young couple's plans. An orphaned brother and sister, Neville and Helena Landless, come to lodge with Septimus Crisparkle, Canon of Cloisterham. Neville is attracted to Rosa, feeling that Edwin takes her for granted, and the two young men quarrel. Jasper, while ostensibly keeping the peace, subtly

abets their enmity, confiding his anxiety about it to Crisparkle and to Rosa's guardian, Grewgious. He also contrives to steal the key to a family vault.

Rosa and Edwin agree to end their engagement. But before they can make the decision public, Edwin disappears one stormy night and suspicion (encouraged by Jasper) falls on Neville. Local feeling drives Neville and Helen away from Cloisterham, and they take rooms in London near Grewgious in the Inns of Court. Jasper declares his passion to Rosa. Terrified, she flees for refuge to Grewgious. Crisparkle, growing suspicious, has the vault opened and finds Edwin's body. Realising Jasper is the murderer, he follows him to London where Jasper, after a visit to an opium den, strangles Neville and hangs him to suggest suicide. Helena and Crisparkle cut him down, saving his life. Meanwhile Jasper is about to murder Rosa, but is prevented by Crisparkle. Jasper, now totally deranged, is imprisoned. Neville and Rosa, out rowing with their friends, exchange glances.

Dickens' last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, is like nothing he had ever written before. Stirring obsession, murder and opium dreams into the sedate world of an English cathedral close, it reads as though Trollope had been re-written by Wilkie Collins. And since he left it half-finished at his death, any film-maker faces a double challenge: not only to recreate the novel in cinematic terms, but to provide a satisfying conclusion to the mystery. Timothy Forder's pedestrian effort falls down badly on both counts. For the first hour or so we get a staid run-through of the chapters Dickens completed. The characters are for the most part as he wrote them, and so is the dialogue; but the grim, brooding atmosphere of the novel never taints these meticulously dressed sets. Bewigged and bewhiskered, a cast of seasoned British thespians parade before Forder's torpid camera and do what's required of them – which in the case of quite a few (Ronald Fraser, Rosemary Leach, Nanette Newman) is little enough.

The last half-hour takes us out of Dickens proper into Dickens pastiche. Into a rather different kind of movie, too – the prowling subjective camera, and a cloaked Robert Powell lurking in corners gazing up at lighted windows, seem to be skirting Dracula territory. Some hint of perverse sexuality might have been welcome at this stage – or even an exploration of the novel's covert homosexual sub-text, with Jasper's jealous passion fixed on his nephew rather than on the insipid Rosa. But instead Forder solves the puzzle by having Jasper go conveniently mad and assault everybody within reach. After which, we sign off with the ultimate British-period-movie cliché – coy glances in a boat on the river. The only mystery about this *Edwin Drood* is why anyone bothered to make it.

Philip Kemp



King of comedy: Billy Crystal

Qiuju Da Guansi (The Story of Qiu Ju)

Hong Kong/China 1992

Director: Zhang Yimou

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Electric

Production Companies

Sil-Metropole

Organisation (HK)/

Youth Film Studio

of Beijing Film

Academy (Beijing)

Executive Producer

Ma Fung-Kwok

Producer

Feng Yiting

Production Manager

Stephen Lam

Unit Manager

Zhang Hongguo

Assistant Directors

Hu Xiaofeng

Zhang Zhenyan

Tian Weixi

Screenplay

Liu Heng

Based on the story

'Wanjia Susong'

by Chen Yuanbin

Directors of Photography

Chi Xiaoning

Yu Xiaogun

Lu Hongyi

In colour

Editor

Du Yuan

Art Director

Cao Jiuping

Set Dresser

Hu Zhongquan

Music

Zhao Jiping

Costume Design

Tong Huamiao

Wardrobe

Zhou Xiaoxing

Make-up

Sun Wei

Sound Recordist

Li Lanhua

Cast

Gong Li

Wan Qiuju

Liu Peiqi

Wan Qinglai

Yang Liuchun

Meizi

Lei Laosheng

Wang Shantang,

Village Chief

Ge Zhijun

Officer Li

Zhu Wanqing

Cui Luowen

Yang Huiqin

Wang Jianfa

Lin Zi

Ye Jun

9,000 feet

100 minutes

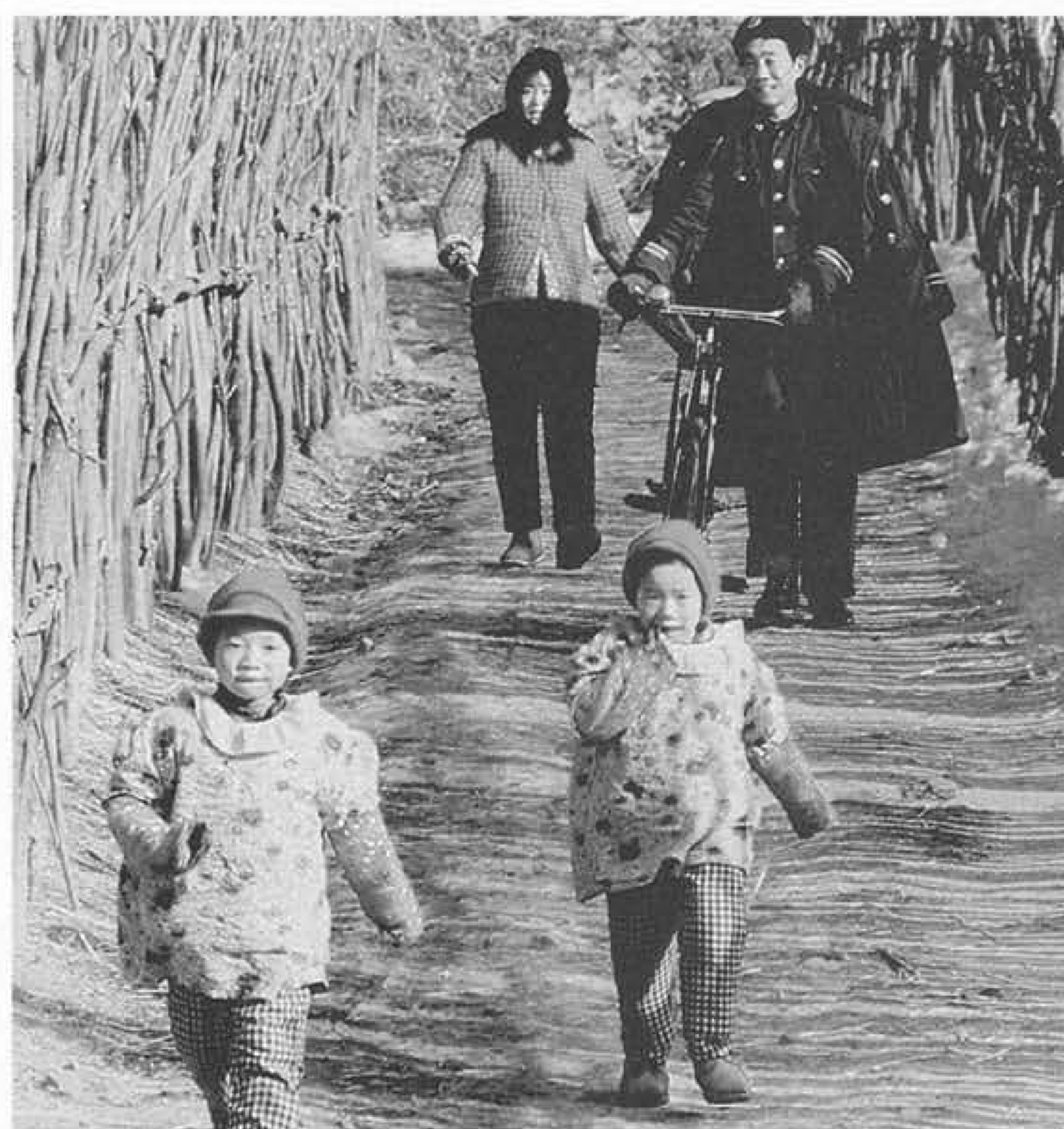
Subtitles

of the city's PSB. His office further endorses the original judgment, but Yan advises Qiuju that she can engage a lawyer and go to court. Despite lawyer Wu's confidence, the suit goes against Qiuju and she lodges an appeal. Investigating officers Lu and Wang arrange for Qinglai to be X-rayed.

Qiuju goes into labour on a night when most villagers are away at a rare opera performance. It becomes clear that she needs medical help, and Qinglai has no choice but to turn to Wang for manpower to carry her to a doctor. After an all-night trek across snowy fields, Qiuju is brought to a hospital, where she gives birth to a healthy son. Qinglai and Qiuju agree that Wang must be guest of honour at the baby's First Month celebration. On the day, however, Li turns up with the news that Wang is to be imprisoned for 15 days on an assault charge; the X-ray reveals that Wang broke one of Qinglai's ribs. Confused and distraught, Qiuju runs across the fields to the village road, chasing the siren of the police car that is carrying Wang into custody.

In terms of Zhang Yimou's career, *The Story of Qiu Ju* is as important for what it isn't as for what it is. At the time that he made it, Zhang was under pressures that would have crushed many lesser directors: the government had reverted to a Maoist hard line in the wake of the massacre in Beijing, and the film authorities once again had strongly prescriptive ideas about the kind of film they wanted to see made; Zhang's last two films (both very successful internationally, and widely seen as 'dissident') were banned in China; and Zhang's off-screen relationship with Gong Li was the object of heated moral censure, fuelled by newspaper articles signed by his estranged wife. Suffering a slow asphyxiation, Zhang desperately needed his new film to restore his personal, political and moral standing.

Accordingly, *The Story of Qiu Ju* is in most respects as different from *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern* as it's possible to be. The choice of a quasi-documentary approach to a grass-roots, here-and-now story was a conscious step away from the China-wide implications of the two preceding films. The choice of a moderately prosperous village as the setting neatly sidestepped the routine accusation that Zhang markets China's 'backwardness' to the world. And the choice of a generally positive story in which a slighted woman meets a succession of honest and helpful officials was designed to stave off any risk of another ban. Of course, hardline Maoists could anyway hardly object to a movie that obliged its director, five actors and a skeleton crew to live with peasants in a Shanxi village for eight months; the way the film was made corresponds exactly with Mao's idea of a Chinese intellectual's responsibilities. In the event, China was so pleased with the film that it invented a co-production credit for one of its own studios (the film was



Village people: Gong Li, Ge Zhijun

actually wholly financed by the Sil-Metropole Organisation in Hong Kong); the Beijing authorities also lifted the bans on Zhang's other films and hosted a high-level dinner to celebrate *Qiu Ju*'s prize in Venice.

What all this means is that the film hits the intended mark as a compromise between political acceptability and Zhang's own creative need for a renewal of some sort. As a fresh approach to the age-old challenge of constructing a 'realist' aesthetic, the film is an undoubted triumph by any standards in the world. The assimilation of cast and crew in village life before and during shooting was of course designed to ensure a certain level of authenticity in matters of regional dialect, dress and body language, but Zhang's strategy of incorporating large numbers of local people in the action as bit players and extras and of shooting more than half the film with hidden cameras and long-range radio mikes gives the overall 'realism' another dimension: a palpable sense of day-to-day social realities runs through the film, in everything from its many shots of village, town and city street-life to the way that actual Public Security Bureau officials, lawyers and letter-writers play themselves.

Zhang focuses this potentially sprawling material in two related ways. First, by editing tightly to keep the story-line moving; the film has at least as strong a narrative thrust as Zhang's earlier movies, and at least as much skill in harnessing seemingly incidental details to the overall structure. Second, more debatably, he pushes the story-line towards melodrama as it goes along to provide himself with a rather glib moral conundrum in the closing scenes. The escalation into melodrama, too obviously imposed from on high, is designed to give the film the kind of

decisive ending that it would otherwise lack. But the moral meaning of the closing scenes has no real relation to the issues the film has raised, and its essential arbitrariness cuts against the grain of the purposive aesthetic method.

Where the film clearly does relate to Zhang's earlier work is in its sexual politics. Qiuju's quest for an apology or an admission of guilt from the village head is less an exploration of China's new civil-law system in action than a cypher for Chinese women's long-term demand to be treated with respect as social equals. Liu Heng's script clearly relates this issue to the clash between the country's current one-child-family policy and the peasant tradition of large families, ideally with a preponderance of boys. Hence the off-screen incident that sets the entire narrative in motion: one man's jibe about another's lack of a son, and an angry, retaliatory kick between the legs. The film observes the underlying social dynamics of this ingrained sexism with admirable acuity, noting also how it underpins the cosy system of male bonding (eg. between the village head and the area policeman) that is such a feature of Chinese society. Best of all, the film is completely unpatronising in its representation of its characters, most of whom are under-educated, unsophisticated country people. There is no stereotyping, and the characters are seen with immense warmth and humour. As ever, Zhang is aided considerably by Gong Li, whose utterly unglamorous performance sets the tone not only for the four other professionals who play Qiuju's immediate family, Wang and Li but also for the countless non-professionals who play characters like themselves without a trace of self-consciousness.

Tony Rayns

A small village in Xigouzi, North China. Chilli farmer Wan Qinglai has been injured by kicks to the genitals and ribs in a fight with village head Wang Shantang. His very pregnant wife Qiuju takes him to a doctor, who confirms that he needs rest to recover. But Wang offers no apology or explanation for the violence of his attack, and so Qiuju resolves to take the matter to the authorities. Area policeman Li Shunlin learns that the fight arose from Wang's refusal of a building permit and Qinglai's jibe that Wang (who has three daughters, two of them illegal under China's current law) has no son and heir. Li advises Wang to compensate Qinglai for his loss of earnings and medical bill. But Wang tries to humiliate Qiuju when he hands over the money, and so she refuses it and takes the case higher.

When the Public Security Bureau in the county town endorses Li's judgment that cash compensation should settle the matter, Qinglai wants to accept it. Undaunted, Qiuju and Qinglai's sister Meizi make the arduous journey to the provincial capital, where a kindly hostel manager puts them in touch directly with Yan, head

Rich In Love

USA 1992

Director: Bruce Beresford

Certificate
PG

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
MGM-Pathe Communications

Producers
Richard D. Zanuck
Lili Fini Zanuck

Co-producers
David Brown
Gary Daigler

Production Co-ordinator
Cynthia Streit

Unit Production Manager
Gary Daigler

Location Manager
Arthur Howe Jnr

Casting
Shari Rhodes

Assistant Directors
Katterli A. Frauenfelder
Bruce Carter

Screenplay
Alfred Uhry
Based on the novel by Josephine Humphreys

Director of Photography
Peter James

Panavision

Colour
DeLuxe

Camera Operator
Erich Roland

24 Frame Video Playback
Mike DeVries

Editor
Mark Warner

Production Designer
John Stoddart

Set Design
Carl Copeland

Set Decorator
John Anderson

Set Dresser
Patrick Fuhrman

Scenic Artist
Lewis Bowen Jnr

Special Effects

Co-ordinator
Roger Lifsey

Music
Georges Delerue

Music Consultants
Jackie Krost
Sharal Churchill

Supervising Music Editor
Jeff Carson

Songs
"I Hear Music" by Frank Loesser, Burton Lane, performed by Billie Holiday; "Ugly Ways Blues" by Lonnie Hamilton, performed by Lonnie Hamilton & The Diplomats; "I've Been Loving You Too Long" by Otis Redding, Jerry Butler, performed by Suzanne Benson; "Blue Moon" by Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers; "Skylark" by Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer, performed by Anita O'Day, Gene Krupa & his Orchestra; "Time Waits For No One" by Caffey, Crewe, Corbetta, performed by The Graces

Costume Design
Colleen Kelsall

Wardrobe
Patty Weintraub
Paul Simmons Jnr
Caroline Errington

Make-up Artist
Dan Striepeke

Title Design
Douy Swofford

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor
Rick Franklin

Sound Editors
Doug Jackson
Bernard Weiser
Gary Mundheim
Simon Coke
Jeff Bushelman
David Pettijohn

ADR Supervisor
James Beshears

Sound Recordists
Hank Garfield
Brion Paccassi

ADR:
Allan Bond
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Steve Maslow
Gregg Landaker

ADR:
Charleen Richards
Foley: Gary Hecker

Foley Artists
Jeff Wilhoit
Christopher Moriana

Cast
Albert Finney
Warren Odom
Jill Clayburgh
Helen Odom
Kathryn Erbe
Lucille Odom
Kyle MacLachlan
Billy McQueen
Piper Laurie
Vera Delmage
Ethan Hawke
Wayne Frobiness
Suzy Amis
Rae Odom
Alfre Woodward
Rhody Poole
J. Leon Pridgen II
Tick
David Hager
Parnell Meade
Ramona Ward
Sharon
Wayne Dehart
Sam Poole
D. L. Anderson
Inn Receptionist
Janell McLeod
Bookstore Clerk
Jennifer Banco
Horse Carriage Driver
Anthony Burke
Singer
Terry Park
Terry
Stephanie Legette
Laura Migo

9,477 feet
105 minutes

As high school breaks up, teenager Lucille fends off Wayne, her most ardent suitor, and heads for home, only to find that her mother Helen has run off. Not wanting her father Warren to read her mother's leaving note, Lucille rewrites it, forging Helen's signature. Reading the note, Warren is suspicious, and sets off in search of his wife, with Lucille's assis-

tance. Unable to find her, Warren becomes increasingly morose, and sits around at home pondering his marriage.

Spending her days helping her father, Lucille misses her high school examinations and graduation. Things liven up when her sister Rae arrives, pregnant and with her new husband Billy McQueen in tow. Lucille, still confident that her mother will return, is accused by Rae of romanticising their mother, telling Lucille that she was born because of an unsuccessful abortion. Awakened by his older daughter's presence, Warren begins to take an interest in life again, and takes up with Vera, the local hairdresser and divorcee, much to Lucille's shock. Wayne and Lucille break up. Billy gets a job teaching history at the local junior high school, but Rae, depressed by her steadily advancing pregnancy, decides that she wants to give up the baby for adoption. Then she decides to keep the baby but get rid of Billy, who reveals to Lucille that he impregnated Rae on purpose to get her to marry him. Billy and Lucille make love.

Lucille goes to a family friend for advice, and finds that Helen has been staying there. Lucille and Helen have a long talk about why she left. Rae goes into labour, and Helen shows up at the hospital to see her grandchild. Helen and Warren seem to take some tentative steps towards reconciliation. Rae decides to keep the baby and Billy. The family sells their house by the ocean, and Lucille leaves for university.

Mom leaves home, the heroine loses her virginity then has sex with her sister's husband, Dad takes up with the neighborhood divorcee, all in a southern setting, and the whole film hasn't a speck of actual drama.

What on earth possessed Bruce Beresford to make this film, except the off-chance of repeating his previous successes below the Mason-Dixon line? In *Crimes of the Heart*, he had Beth Henley's ultra-quirky source material and three of the finest actresses in American movies. In *Driving Miss Daisy*, he had Alfred Uhry's virtually director-proof script, and two extremely sly performers in Morgan Freeman and Jessica Tandy. The Academy's failure to nominate Beresford for a directing Oscar should have surprised no-one - it seldom hands out Oscars simply for failing to screw up good material.

After directing a huge hit, especially an Oscar-winning one, a director usually has his choice of any film he wants, within reason. Beresford chose to do *Rich In Love*, Uhry's adaptation of Josephine Humphreys' novel about an almost dysfunctional Southern family. One can see how this might work as a novel, all of it seen through the eyes of Lucille, the late adolescent girl who has the sort of intense sensitivity to her surroundings that one only finds in coming-of-age novels. But Beresford and Uhry manage to make every key dramatic sequence happen off-screen. Anything that might upset an audience on the conservative side of Queen



Southern comfort: Amis, MacLachlan

Victoria has been trimmed away. *Rich In Love* has no sex, no violence, no four-letter words. It could play on television tomorrow, and no-one would find anything amiss, save perhaps the ratings dropping precipitously as the audience drifted away in search of something more than genteel good taste.

One would hardly argue that all stories with southern settings need the Gothic *Sturm und Drang* of Faulkner, or the religious terror of Flannery O'Connor, but *Rich In Love* might have been made by an unholy alliance between Chamber of Commerce types more interested in shopping malls than Civil War monuments and the Niceness Police who complain about the lack of 'family values' in American movies. (By way of contrast, one could argue that the success of *The Prince of Tides* resulted from its weird fusion of contemporary psychotherapeutic sensitivity with the Gothic horrors of the hero's childhood - located not too far from the South Carolina settings of *Rich In Love*.)

Finally, a word about actors and dialects. The diversity of America guarantees a pool of actors of every possible ethnic and regional heritage. The list of distinguished actors from the South - or convincingly capable of playing Southerners - includes Blythe Danner, Judith Ivey, Nick Nolte, Sissy Spacek, Rip Torn, Robert Duvall, *ad nauseam*, *ad gloriam*. The list does not include Jill Clayburgh, Kathryn Erbe, Suzy Amis, Piper Laurie or Albert Finney, whose work here does not add his name to the list of British actors who have distinguished themselves playing American southerners (James Mason, Charles Laughton, Maggie Smith, Vivien Leigh, Natasha Richardson, for starters).

The cast are all fine actors, but here they create one of those strange movie families in which nobody has the same accent. Admittedly, none of the sisters in *Crimes of the Heart* sounded alike either, but the ensemble of Sissy Spacek, Jessica Lange and Diane Keaton provided such a feast of acting that nobody cared. I suspect that Beresford has no real ear for American speech. This has not been an issue when working with tiny ensembles and first-rate material from writers who do have such an ear, but here the sound of the actors offends anyone who takes pleasure in the specific sounds of America's various accents.

John Harkness

Sommersby

USA/France 1993

Director: Jon Amiel

Certificate
12

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Companies
Regency Enterprises
(Los Angeles)/Le Studio
Canal Plus (Paris)

Executive Producers
Richard Gere
Maggie Wilde

Producers
Arnon Milchan
Steven Reuther

Co-producer
Mary McLaglen

Production Supervisor
Gig Rackauskas

Production Co-ordinator
Cydney Bernard

Unit Production Manager
Mary McLaglen

Location Manager
Scott Elias

Post-production Supervisor
Carol Dantuono

Casting
Billy Hopkins
Suzanne Smith

Assistant Directors
Josh McLaglen
Doug Raine
Xochi Blymyer
Deborah Ball

Screenplay
Nicholas Meyer
Sarah Kernochan

Story
Nicholas Meyer
Anthony Shaffer
Based on the film *The Return of Martin Guerre* written by Daniel Vigne, Jean-Claude Carrière

Director of Photography
Philippe Rousselot

Colour
DuArt
Prints by Technicolor

Camera/Steadicam

Operator
Anastas "Tass" Michos

Editor
Peter Boyle

Production Designer
Bruno Rubeo

Art Director
Michael Johnston

Set Design
Marco Rubeo

Set Decorator
Michael Seirton

Set Dresser
Joseph Conway

Scenic Artist
Michael Zansky

Storyboard Artist
Ray Prado

Special Effects

Co-ordinator
Gregory S. Hull

Music
Danny Elfman

Music Director
Jonathan Sheffer

Orchestrations
Steve Bartek

Additional:
Philip Giffin
Thomas Pasatieri

Music Editors
Ellen Segal
Bob Badami

Choreography
Colleen Kelly

Costume Design
Marilyn Vance-Straker

Associate:
Dan Lester

Costume Supervisor
Lisa Lovaas

Wardrobe
Jean Wesner

Make-up
Peter Robb-King
Jean-Luc Russier

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
Jay Wilkinson
Lauren Palmer

Sound Editors
Lou Angelo
David A. Arnold
Simon Coke
Teri E. Dorman
Scott Hecker
Dave Kulczycki
John A. Larsen
Rodger Pardee
Karen Wilson

ADR Editors
Jerelyn J. Harding
Jessica Gallavan

Sound Recordists
Chris Newman

Music:
Shawn Murphy

ADR Recordists
Charleen Richards
Gregg Steele

Foley Recordists
Jim Ashwill
Neres Gezalyan
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Michael Minkler
Robert Beemer
Chris Carpenter

Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Hilda Hodges

Stunt Co-ordinator
Paul Beahm

Stunts
Paul Beahm
Jill Stokesberry
Bob Minor
Merritt Yohnka

Cast
Richard Gere
Jack Sommersby
Jodie Foster
Laurel Sommersby
Bill Pullman
Orin Meecham
James Earl Jones
Judge Isaacs
Lanny Flaherty
Buck
William Windom
Reverend Powell
Wendell Wellman
Travis
Brett Kelley
Little Rob
Clarice Taylor
Esther
Frankie Faison
Joseph
Ronald Lee Ermey
Dick Mead
Richard Hamilton
Doc Evans
Karen Kirschenbauer
Mrs Evans
Carter McNeese
Storekeeper Wilson
Dean Whitworth
Tom Clemmons
Stan Kelly
John Green
Stephanie Weaver
Mrs Bundy
Khaz B.
Eli
Josh McClarren
Mark Williams
Boys
Muse Watson
Drifter
Paul Austin
KKK Member/Folsom
Frank Taylor
Billy Butch Frank
Dale Stewart
KKK Members
Jake Cress
Doug Sloan
Marshalls
Ray McKinnon
Lawyer Webb

Maury Chaykin
Lawyer Dawson
Stuart Fallen
Court Bailiff
Barry McLerran
Clerk
Richard Lineback
Timothy Fry
Michael Gold
Night Clerk
Joe Basham
Witness

Patrick Morse
Boarding House
Manager
Joe Neel
Auctioneer
Harry T. Daniel
Official

10,194 feet
113 minutes

● Vine Hill, Tennessee. Two years after the Civil War, Jack Sommersby, who left to fight seven years earlier, returns. The town celebrates, but Jack's wife Laurel, who remembers their unhappy marriage, is wary. She is pleasantly surprised by Jack's new-found tenderness, and others also notice a change in his manner. Jack avoids their questions by announcing a plan to revive the town's ailing fortunes which involves selling everyone a portion of his land to grow a valuable tobacco crop. One day Orin Meecham, who had been courting Laurel in Jack's absence, becomes curious when he hears a drifter declare that Jack's real name is Horace Townsend. His suspicions increase when a KKK member claims that Jack is a schoolteacher, but are temporarily deflected by the successful tobacco harvest. The celebrations are cut short when Jack is arrested for the murder of a local gambler.

During the trial Orin realises that Jack is an imposter and that the real Jack Sommersby committed the murder. He convinces Laurel that she should tell the truth about her husband's identity, which would save Jack's life but also destroy his name. Jack refuses to accept this and persuades Laurel to retract her statement out of love for him. He is found guilty and sentenced to hang. The tobacco is sold for a hefty profit. In prison, Jack confesses to Laurel that his name is Townsend. Having met Sommersby as a POW, he stole her dead husband's identity and came to Vine Hill. Following Jack's hanging the town begins to prosper from its tobacco crop. Laurel lays flowers on a grave marked 'Jack Sommersby'.

● From *The Long Night (Le Jour se lève)* to the mooted Fonda-ised version of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, Hollywood has looked to Europe for narrative inspiration. However, the most frequently re-made foreign movies are comedies or action thrillers, genres with which the US industry feels at home. The tradition of adult



Après-'Guerre': Richard Gere

period drama is weaker in contemporary Hollywood, and *Sommersby*, a new version of *The Return of Martin Guerre*, is something of an anomaly. Exhibiting a degree of cultural insecurity, the production team appears to have based the film's style on the aesthetic of Sunday afternoon BBC television drama. The finish product is very different from Jon Amiel's earlier work in television (*The Singing Detective*) and film (*Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, *Queen of Hearts*).

Where the original waded knee-deep in historical detail, *Sommersby* opts for an altogether more restrained telling of this popular French folk story. In fact, it's in comparison to the original that *Sommersby*'s more interesting moments are revealed. For example, the religious intolerance and moral certainty of *Guerre*'s universe, which provided the film with both a framing device and a narrative motor, have been replaced by the racism and social bankruptcy of post-Civil War Tennessee. But although performing the same function, they also give a wider perspective by showing the reaction to *Sommersby*'s fraudulent activities. Strangely enough, *Sommersby* actually constructs its central character as an eerily prescient, Clintonesque figure offering communal salvation, replete with an economic rescue package that calls for personal sacrifice, as in the scene where Richard Gere convinces the townspeople to contribute their savings in order to buy the valuable tobacco seeds. Unfortunately, the film is not interested in pursuing the conceit, and its social politics are simplistic. For example, in reply to the pervasive racism it depicts it can only offer Gere's laid-back good neighbourliness as a solution.

Sommersby has a feeling of autumnal portentousness; the brooding soundtrack, subdued colours and slow-building narrative seem to suffocate it with an air of solemnity. Having explicitly raised issues about the nature of love and identity, the film fails to flesh them out. As the eponymous hero, Gere cuts a curious figure. The characters he usually portrays are the glamorous but mysterious men of *Pretty Woman*, *American Gigolo* and *Breathless*, and it's this mixture of cool, empty allure that he brings to his role as Jack Sommersby. Which means that Depardieu's fast-talking rogue is transformed into Gere's smooth-talking charmer – a subtle but key difference, and one that creates a coldness at the movie's centre which Jodie Foster, playing in a typically tough-skinned manner, is unable to melt. Gere's performance also contributes to the film's aimless drift, which only disappears as it mutates into a courtroom drama in which procedure and action become more important than performance. A generally lifeless film, *Sommersby* fails to generate any sense of tragedy or passion, preferring to remain at a distance to the story, mistaking seriousness for profundity and aloofness for sophistication.

Jason Drake

Splitting Heirs

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Robert Young

Certificate

12

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Prominent Features

Executive Producer

Eric Idle

Producers

Simon Bosanquet

Redmond Morris

Production Executive

Prominent Features:

Steve Abbott

Production Co-Ordinator

Deborah Harding

Production Managers

Kathy Sykes

France:

Antoine Sabarros

Unit Manager

Keith Hatcher

Location Managers

Howard Gibbins

France:

Jean-Pierre Millas

2nd Unit Director

Simon Bosanquet

Casting

Michelle Guish

Assistant Directors

Jonathan Benson

Melvin Lind

Antony Ford

Trevor Wright

France:

Murray Ashton

Screenplay

Eric Idle

Director of Photography

Tony Pierce-Roberts

Technicolor

Underwater Photography

Michael Valentine

Aerial Photography

Henry Braham

Camera Operators

Philip Sindall

2nd Unit:

Rickie Gauld

Editor

John Jympson

Production Designer

John Beard

Art Directors

Rod McLean

Lucy Richardson

Set Decorator

Joanne Woollard

Storyboard Artist

Paul Pethick

Special Effects Supervisor

George Gibbs

Special Effects

Trevor Neighbour

Steve Lloyd

Paul Knowles

Steve Hamilton

Peter Fern

Darrell Guyon

David Hunter

Music

Michael Kamen

Music Performed by

W11 Symphonia

of the Air

Orchestrations

Nick Ingman

Michael Kamen

Music Editor

Dina Eaton

Songs

"I Put A Spell On

You" by Jay Hawkins,

performed by Nina

Simone; "Someone

Stole My Baby" by

Eric Idle, "La Mère"

by Michael Kamen,

Eric Idle, performed

by Eric Idle: "It's A Long

Way To Tipperary" by

Jack Judge, Harry H.

Williams; "Remember

Not Lord Our Offences"

by Henry Purcell; "The

Wedding Blues" by Pete

Martin, performed by

Pete Martin's Jazz Kings

Costume Designer

Penny Rose

Wardrobe

Ginny Luthwood

Make-up

Paul Engelen

Lynda Armstrong

Titles/Opticals

The Optical

Partnership

Front Titles

The Creative

Partnership

Sound Editors

Bob Risk

Dubbing:

Peter Pennell

Dialogue:

Alan Paley

Foley Editor

Peter Holt

Sound Recordist

Peter Glossop

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Gerry Humphreys

Robin O'Donoghue

Foley/ADR:

John Bateman

Stunt Co-Ordinator

Simon Crane

Stunts

Graeme Crowther

Jim Dowdall

Tom Delmar

Steve Dent

Vincent Keane

Paul Jennings

Tim Lawrence

Sean McCabe

Gary Powell

Lee Sheward

Paul Weston

Cast

Eric Idle

Tommy

Rick Moranis

Henry

Barbara Hershey

Duchess Lucinda

Catherine Zeta Jones

Kitty

John Cleese

Shadgrind

Sadie Frost

Angela

Stratford Johns

Butler

Brenda Bruce

Mrs Bullock

William Franklyn

Andrews

Charbula Chokshi

Mrs Patel

Jeremy Clyde

14th Duke

Richard Haw

Brittle

Eric Sykes

Jobson the Doorman

Bridget McConnell

Nanny

Bill Stewart

Adoption Agent

Paul Brooke

Tour Guide

David Ross

Sergeant Richardson

Cal Macaninch

CID Officer

Anisha Gangotra

Gita

Amanda Dickinson

Barmaid

Chris Jenkinson

Police Constable

Keith Smith

Photographer

Stephen Grothgar

German Tourist

Madge Ryan

Woman with Dog

Bill Wallis

Vicar at Hunt

Cameron Blakeley

Hunt Saboteur

Louise Downey

Doreen

Llewellyn Rees

Old Major

Paul Weston

Tim Lawrence

French Drivers

Gary Lineker

Michelle Lineker

Couple at Restaurant

7,875 feet

87 minutes

● During the swinging 60s, the Duchess of Bournemouth accidentally leaves her baby in a restaurant while she goes out dancing with her hippie friends. On the same day, another baby is abandoned in a telephone box. The Duchess reclaims the wrong baby, and her real child, Tommy, is brought up by the Patels, a poor Pakistani family living in Southall.

Tommy grows up to become a stockbroker in the City. One day, he is asked by his boss to look after an American associate, Henry, who is shortly due to arrive in London on business. Tommy reluctantly agrees, accompanying Henry on a wild night out in the pubs and nightclubs. Tommy's job is under threat, especially when his boss discovers he has been pilfering the company's petty cash. However, when the Duke of Bournemouth falls overboard from his boat and drowns, Henry inherits the title and takes charge of the business where Tommy works. Soon, Henry and Tommy have become fast friends.

Tommy accidentally discovers his real mother was the Duchess Lucinda and that he should rightfully be in Henry's shoes. His jealousy of Henry is compounded when he learns that the beautiful, flirtatious Kitty is planning to marry Henry, not because she loves him, but because she wants to be a duchess. Tommy tries to press his claim to the Bournemouth title. His solicitor, the sinister Shadgrind, tells him he doesn't have a case unless he manages to kill Henry. Tommy is so desperate to get on in the world that he devises a series of far-fetched schemes for murdering his rival. First, he ties him up in a basket of a hot air balloon and lets him loose in the sky; then he tries poison; then, during Henry and Kitty's honeymoon, he attempts to blow Henry up and, when that fails, to burn him to death. Finally, he decides he likes Henry too much to kill him. But Shadgrind, who has no such scruples, wants to assassinate Henry in the belief that he and Tommy will ►

◀ share the Bournemouth spoils.

The Duchess Lucinda learns that Tommy, not Henry, is her real son. At the same time, Henry finds out Kitty has had an affair with Tommy. Henry drives away from his country house in disgust; Shadgrind has planted a bomb in his car, but this fails to kill him and he returns to the manor. He manages to save Kitty and Tommy's life, but is almost shot by Shadgrind in the process. Realising the game is up, Shadgrind flees but is caught and mauled to death by one of the panthers kept as Bournemouth mascots. Tommy accedes to the Bournemouth title, and he and Henry set up a business, opening the Bournemouth estates to the public and turning them into an American-style theme park.

● In the wake of *A Fish Called Wanda*, which made close to \$200 million worldwide, *Splitting Heirs* casts more than half an eye on the American market, combining British locations and actors with a brace of Hollywood stars. On paper, at least, the pairing of *Python* veterans Eric Idle and John Cleese with the gnomish, kid-shrinking Rick Moranis and the versatile Barbara Hershey must have seemed every bit as intriguing as *Wanda's* casting of Cleese and Michael Palin opposite Jamie Lee Curtis and Kevin Kline. Unfortunately, the gamble doesn't come off.

Completely shorn of the anarchy and excess which were the hallmark of the *Python* team in its prime, *Splitting Heirs* emerges as a loose, mid-Atlantic hybrid with wafer-thin characters. The film seems stuck in a time-warped: the Brits behave like refugees from *Upstairs, Downstairs*, with society strictly divided into repressed, besuited toffs who sneer at their butlers or, down in the scullery, comic-turn policemen, cooks and nannies. Unlike Charles Crichton, who was able to bring a wry, Ealing-like irony to *Wanda*, director Robert Young eschews understatement, aiming instead for knock-about farce. In telling the tale of a little man fighting for his fortune, he uses a broad, crude style worthy of the great journeyman of British cinema, John

Paddy Carstairs, who made scores of similarly untaxing comedies with stars like Formby and Wisdom. As with Carstairs, the pace and cheerful inanity of the picture may go some way to excusing its lack of wit and subtlety. Young can hardly be blamed for Eric Idle's feeble script, which is so heavily reliant on slapstick, explosions (exploding prams, exploding clay pigeons, exploding oxygen tanks and exploding cars) and seaside-postcard innuendo that it's hard to sustain much interest in the story.

If the film fails to impress on its own terms, and manages to squander a high-voltage cast, it nevertheless offers fitful reminders of earlier, more impressive work from its makers. Idle's nasal voice-over, and his portrayal of a dispossessed young relative having to kill his way to his inheritance, are vaguely reminiscent of Dennis Price in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Moranis, gum-chewing, roller-skating, eminently personable, seems quite at home: after all, this is a nerdy film. Cleese, mildly psychotic as the murderous Shadgrind, reprises his funny walk, always a sign of desperation. There are one or two memorable lines of dialogue – Miss Saigon, for instance, is aptly described as a "cross between *Apocalypse Now* and *The Sound of Music*" – and Barbara Hershey gives a cheerfully overblown, pantomime-style performance as the nymphomaniacal Duchess Lucinda, who unknowingly tries to seduce her own son.

Interviewed in 1989 on the twentieth anniversary of the first *Python* show, Idle suggested that comedy's job was "to be against things ... to be anti-authoritarian" and to deflate pomposity with "subversive mockery." What is most depressing about *Splitting Heirs* is its conservatism. It doesn't seem to be attacking or deriding anything much at all. Instead, it packages British stereotypes for American consumption, depicting Brideshead-like country houses where the upper-class yeomen of England enjoy their shooting and fox hunting, and pubs where the locals still sing from Vera Lynn's back catalogue.

Geoffrey Macnab



Cinema of Wanda: John Cleese, Eric Idle

Untamed Heart

USA 1993

Director: Tony Bill

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Metro-Goldwyn Mayer

Executive Producer

J. Boyce Harman Jnr

Producers

Tony Bill

Helen Buck Bartlett

Associate Producers

Tom Sierchio

Marci Liroff

Production Co-ordinator

Julie Hartley

Unit Production Manager

J. Boyce Harman Jnr

Location Manager

Bob Graf

Casting

Marci Liroff

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

Babu (T.R.)

Subramaniam

Joyce Mayeda-Jones

Leslie D. Franks

Screenplay

Tom Sierchio

Director of Photography

Jost Vacano

Colour

DeLuxe

Camera Operators

Greg Cummings

Anette Haellmigg

Steadicam Operator

Ted Churchill

Video Operator

Harlan D. Snodgrass

Editor

Mia Goldman

Production Designer

Steven Jordan

Art Director

Jack D. L. Ballance

Set Decorator

Cliff Cunningham

Set Dresser

Heather McElhatton

Scenic Artist

Nancy Derby

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Michael Wood

Special Effects

Brian Wood

Eric D. Howell

Shelley Hawkos

Michael Arnold

Music

Cliff Eidelman

Orchestrations

Cliff Eidelman

Additional:

Jeff Atmajian

Music Supervisors

Sharal Churchill

Jackie Krost

Music Editor

Kenneth Karman

Songs

"This Time of the Year"

by Cliff Owens, Jesse

Hollis, performed

by Brook Benton;

"Sexploration" by

Conning, Mayer, Orbit,

performed by LAPD;

"Try Me" by James

Brown, performed

by Los Lobos; "Tom's

Diner" by Suzanne

Vega, performed

by DNA featuring

Suzanne Vega;

"Bad Bad Boys"

by P. Aronsson,

M. Berhanu,

F. Teclahaimanot,

M. Berhanu, performed

by Midi, Maxi & Efti;

"Devolution Workin'

Man's Blues" by Eddie

MacDonald, Mike

Peters, performed

by The Alarm; "Blue Moon Revisited (Song for Elvis)" by Timmins, Timmins, Rodgers, Hart, performed by Cowboy Junkies; "Blood From a Stone" by Anne Preven, performed by Stacy Earl; "Life is Hard", "Standard White Jesus" by Pat MacDonald, Barbara MacDonald, performed by Timbuk 3; "The World is Not a Stranger" by Carla Bianco, performed by Stacy Earl; "Nature Boy" by Eden Ahbez, performed by Roger Williams; "Mercy" by and performed by Holly Vincent

Costume Design

Lynn Bernay

Wardrobe

Ann Miller

Make-up

Darcy Knight

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

Bill Phillips

Jimmy Ling

Foley Editor

Jeff Whilhoit

Sound Recordists

Scott Austin

Aaron Bryson

Matthew Quast

Music:

Armin Steiner

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Gary C. Bourgeois

Scott Millan

Elmo Ponsdomenech

Sound Effects Editors

John Phillips

Hal Sanders

Pieter Hubbard

Jeff Whilhoit

Stunt Co-ordinators

Jack Gill

Tom Sierchio

Stunts

Melissa Vickery-

Bareford

David Gregory

Cast

Christian Slater

Adam

Marisa Tomei

Caroline

Rosie Perez

Cindy

Kyle Secor

Howard

Willie Garson

Patsy

James Cade

Bill 1

Gary Groomes

Bill 2

Claudia Wilkens

Mother Camilla

Pat Clemons

Sister Helen

Lotis Key

Vanessa Hart

Nuns

Charley Bartlett

Young Adam

Vincent Kartheiser

Orphan Boy

Wendy Feder

Orphanage Nurse

Nancy Marvy

Caroline's Mom

Paul Douglas Law

Steven

Josh Schaefer

Michael

Marquette Senters

Mary

Joe Minjares

Jim

Joe Schmit

Sportscaster

John Beasley

Cook

Steve Cochran

Stromboli

Sally Wingert

Tree Customer

Richard Grusin

Caroline's Father

Buffy Sedlachek

Lottie

Tom Sierchio

Ronnie

Aaron Kjenaas

Nick

Isabell Monk

Police Officer

Allen Hamilton

Doctor

Kay Bonner Nee

Beauty Shop Customer

Lia Rivamonte

Beauty School

Instructor

Greg Sain

Kevin

Margaret McGraw

Girl in Car

John Paul Gamoke

Priest

9,201 feet

102 minutes

● In an orphanage run by nuns, a small boy, Adam, suffering from a terrible heart condition, is comforted by Mother Camilla, who tells him the story of how his father was killed by the Baboon King, who in turn gave Adam his heart.

Years later, Adam is a busboy at Jim's, a Minneapolis diner. Too shy to speak a word, he has eyes only for Caroline, a young waitress who is always falling in love with men who reject her. One night at work, Caroline is taunted by two men, Howard and Patsy. They accost her as she is walking home and attempt to rape her, but Adam bursts out of nowhere and beats them to a pulp. Covering the unconscious Caroline with his coat, he carries her back to her house. When she comes to, he scuttles away. When Caroline returns to work, she pieces together what happened and thanks Adam for saving her, kissing him on the cheek. He begins to speak, explaining that he follows her home every night to make sure she gets home safely. Hesitantly, they begin a love affair. Adam, who wasn't allowed any physical contact as a child for fear of infection, is overcome by Caroline's kindness.

Caroline's best friend and co-worker Cindy persuades Caroline to come out on a double date with another guy. When they all return to the diner, Caroline worries that Adam might jump to the wrong conclusions. But before she can speak to him (indeed, before he even notices that she has a date), he is stabbed in the parking lot by Howard and Patsy. At the hospital, the doctor explains to Caroline that, while the wound was not fatal, Adam needs a heart transplant. Despite this, Caroline and Adam are happy through the spring. On Adam's birthday, she takes him to a hockey game, and he dies peacefully on the way home. After the funeral, Caroline finds an unopened present he left for her: the records Mother Camilla gave him.

● I've never trusted movies which proclaim their tragic inevitability before I've even had time to fold up my coat. In *Untamed Heart's* prologue (pompously shot in sepia), the good, kind Mother Camilla holds young Adam's hand and says sadly, "Oh Adam, your poor, poor heart," as if it weren't obvious from the way the child smiles up at her that he is a gentle soul with a loving heart, albeit one due to expire



Dodgy ticker: Christian Slater, Marisa Tomei

before the 102 minutes are up.

So at first it's a relief when the film does not develop into an overwrought weepie, something of which Tony Bill, who perpetrated *Six Weeks* (Mary Tyler Moore, Dudley Moore, and an adorable child dying of leukemia) is perfectly capable. But despite its bodice-ripping Mills and Boon title, *Untamed Heart* is a vision of love so idealized and toothless it seems to have been devised by a 12-year-old girl. Cribbing from *Beauty and the Beast* as much as from *Love Story*, the film posits Adam as a kind of saintly wild child. Silent until a kiss unlocks his voice, he's also marked for death by a scar on his chest so enormous and so baroque it looks as though Dr Frankenstein was the surgeon. Because he saves Caroline from rape (a Mills & Boon device if there ever was one), the rest of his actions are portrayed through the soft-focus lens of gratitude; the fact that he follows her home in the dark is given as an example of his courtly solicitude. He also steals her picture from behind the bar, and sneaks in through her bedroom window at night to watch her sleep – pure guardian angel behaviour, and not a bit creepy. Caroline accepts each of these revelations with a kind of hushed wonder, and we are supposed to go along with it, as if breaking into someone's bedroom were a sweet, tender expression of devotion. Never mind that if she were the slightest bit frightened or repulsed by this, Adam would become the psychopathic Sean Bean character in the BBC film *Tell Me That You Love Me*.

Untamed Heart is so desperate to convince us that there is only harmony, between Caroline and Adam that it sweeps everything under the carpet. There aren't even any inadvertent cruelties and disappointments in their relationship – all conflict is conveniently located outside them, mostly in the heinous Howard and Patsy. Even

when the film knows it should raise questions, it doesn't follow through. After Caroline has been attacked, there is some attempt to empathise with her fear and disgust – she flinches when her boss touches her shoulder in friendly greeting. But as soon as she and Adam kiss, she becomes all wise and giving and untroubled, smilingly leading him to her bedroom.

More baffling still is the scene when the double-date foursome come to the diner, and Caroline, fearing a misunderstanding with Adam, pleads with Cindy to go somewhere else. It's just shaping up to be an uncomfortable moment all round when Adam gets stabbed and the whole of the potential conflict is discarded. You wonder why the film-makers bothered to set up the scene in the first place.

Christian Slater copes manfully with a part where he has to play mute and cower like a frightened animal to begin with, then say things like "always the same dream ... the jungle ... twisted limbs ... and the rain, always the rain...". He plays conscientiously against wise-cracking, junior Jack Nicholson type, but it is a thankless role. Marisa Tomei, after her screen-crunching exuberance in *My Cousin Vinny*, seems a little subdued as the wistful, warm-hearted Caroline, but Rosie Perez has fun with the sassy waitress part. Twitching her butt to the jukebox or turning down the corners of her mouth in grudging approval when sizing up Adam ("Yeah, I'd do him"), she has a wicked comic aplomb.

But by the time Adam goes gently into that good night (and he does – drops off like someone taking a nap) you're baulking at the film's dishonesty. Caroline, sorrowful but at peace, tells Cindy, "He was like an angel." Sure he was. And death isn't frightening. The only thing pumping through this *Heart* is rose water.

Caren Myers

Verführung: die Grausame Frau (Seduction: The Cruel Woman)

Germany 1985

Directors: Elfi Mikesch, Monika Treut

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Out On a Limb

Production Company

Hyena Films

With financial

assistance from

Hamburger Filmbüro/

Filmbüro NW

Producers

Monika Treut

Elfi Mikesch

Supervising Producer

René Gundelach

Assistant Director

Margit Czenki

Screenplay

Monika Treut

Elfi Mikesch

Inspired by the novel

Venus in Furs by Leopold

von Sacher-Masoch

Director of Photography

Elfi Mikesch

In colour

Editor

Renate Merck

Art Director

Manfred Blösser

Costume Designer

Anne Jud

Sound Recordist/

Rerecordist

Richard Borowski

Cast

Mechthild Grossmann

Wanda

Udo Kier

Gregor

Sheila McLaughlin

Justine

Carola Regnier

Caren

Georgette Dee

Friederike

Peter Weibel

Journalist

7,560 feet

84 minutes

Subtitles

Wanda is a dominatrix who runs a 'gallery' on the Hamburg waterfront where audiences pay to watch fantasy scenarios in which she humiliates her slaves. Her female lover Caren is a shoe fetishist who runs a shoe shop. Justine, a young American woman, arrives to work as trainee in the gallery. After the floorshow, in which a slave is used as a chair, Wanda throws Justine into a cell-like room; when Justine protests, Wanda replies that she does not need another lover.

Justine is shown around the chambers of the gallery by the male slave Gregor. Gregor then goes to Wanda, with whom he is in love; after reminding him to discharge his domestic duties, she orders him to sleep with her that night. A male journalist interviews Wanda on the pretext of preparing a series of articles on "sexual deviations". He asks her to take him on as a client, but she is evasive. In the gallery's shower room, the journalist kneels before her and begs to be used as her toilet. Wanda visits Caren. They argue and then have sex. The journalist mops and crawls about on the shower room floor while Wanda verbally humiliates him, delaying his gratification. Wanda rows with the uppity Justine, then toys with the besotted Gregor, demanding his love but withholding hers, leaving him frustrated. Alone, she views a video of herself in the shower room with the journalist.

Friederike, another female slave, accuses Justine of not working with

her and leave her tied up; Wanda rows with Friederike. A wealthy client impassively watching a spanking scenario drops banknotes on to a silver tray. Justine, locked in her cell, becomes angry. In an elaborate dock-side scenario watched by a large audience, Gregor is tied up and humiliated by Wanda for daring to imagine that he's her lover. The audience applauds as he is stripped and led away in a yoke. Wanda, beatific and suddenly kind, commands Justine to take her to her bathroom. Justine whips Wanda, then kisses her. Gregor is left tied up in a filthy basement. On a ferry across the harbour, Wanda tells a disapproving Caren that Gregor was a great artist until he broke the rules of seduction by falling in love. Gregor sees Wanda and Justine making love; he confronts Wanda, claiming that she owes him something under their contract. Wanda fires him. Gregor tries to shoot himself but the gun fails. In a final scenario in a dungeon, Wanda makes Justine mistress over the other slaves. Gregor appears among the caged male spectators and shoots at her, but only grazes her hand. Humiliated, he leaves. Justine drinks the blood from Wanda's hand.

Challenging prejudice by presenting 'deviant' sexuality as ordinary has long been a Treut trademark. *Seduction* – her first feature, co-written and directed with Elfi Mikesch – takes this approach into particularly problematic territory in which the commercial and the consensual are symbiotically entangled and distinctions between public spectacle and 'real-life' human relations are disturbingly blurred. This dissolution of reassuring boundaries reaches its apotheosis in the scene in which Wanda's punishment of the lovelorn Gregor for demanding emotional reciprocity rather than 'knowing his place' as her slave becomes pure S/M spectacle, enacted in front of a paying audience in full evening dress.

However, Gregor's apparent orgasm during this public humiliation undermines our discomfort about its larger implications. The question at stake here is who exactly benefits from the 'liberation' of eroticising power relations. While Justine, the recruit who resists slave status, is rewarded (in a classically Sadeian rite of passage) by being promoted to her mistress's mistress and Wanda, secure in her authority as proprietor/dominatrix, chooses to relax into submission under her new lover, *Seduction's* outcome reaffirms a status quo in which 'weakness' (i.e. emotion) is punished while the 'top' remains firmly on top.

At the same time, though, the experience of seeing such untrammelled power enjoyed (in every sense) by a woman is both seductive and liberating (and rare enough to be disconcerting for that reason alone). *Seduction* is in the business of portraying human beings rather than 'addressing issues', and in cinematic and dramatic terms this mix of dark humour, cool ►

◀ observation and personal investment in its subject (Treut is author of a thesis on the representation of women in Sade and Sacher-Masoch, and *Seduction* credits *Venus in Furs* as an inspiration) works a treat. By addressing its audience as initiates rather than voyeurs, the film offers more intelligent insights into formalised S/M – its problems as well as its right-off pleasures – than could 'objective' film-making.

This point is underscored by dancer Mechthild Grossmann's complex, unidealised Wanda, a dark, icy disrupter playfully enchanted by her own powers, who enrages as much as bewitches those around her. One slave calls her a "despicable egotist" to her face; and the escalating acrimony between Wanda and her on-the-way-out lover Caren centres precisely around the latter's discomfort with the former's Sadeian philosophy. "He is nothing, I am everything," Wanda tells Caren of Gregor. "I hope you don't say the same thing about me one day," Caren snaps.

Far more satisfyingly transgressive are Wanda's encounters with the journalist whose plans to interview her are rapidly set aside in favour of the pleasures of piss. His initial attempts to 'get to the bottom of her' – in line with the commonplace male belief that off-the-rails female sexuality and the (doubtless doubly dubious) motives of female sex workers need to be 'explained' – are neutralised by her opaque and provocative replies and finally subverted into an investigation of his inner motives. "Your profession is writing," she responds to the obvious question about her personal/professional involvement in her work. "That's not exactly harmless, is it?" In a hilarious inversion of our judgmental expectations, it's Wanda who retains professional control, while her questioner's uncontrollable desires expose the far-from-objective nature of his 'professional' interest in her.

Above all, *Seduction* looks stunning, clothed and hatted with the formality of 50s Dior and framed and lit with a colour co-ordinated glamour which gives *Swoon*'s black-and-white beauty a run for its modest money. From the dazzling whiteness of Wanda's bathroom, lit by flaming torches set in giant shells, to the blue-lit interiors of the gallery and the burning brazier which marks it out on the quayside the intensity of its images is undiluted by the transition from 16 to 35mm.

Whatever you make of the film's pretensions in opening with an epigram from Jean Baudrillard, you can't fault its badly behaved humour. At one point the journalist distractedly pleads with Wanda to watch him licking out the urinals at Hamburg station. "Women don't use urinals, you fool," she snarls. In another scene, Justine protests at being dressed up as a nurse. "But you're so natural," purrs Wanda. "Since when has being a nurse been natural?" demands Justine. The value of *Seduction* is that Treut and Mikesch are smart enough to know that natural's not in it.

Claire Monk

Wild West

United Kingdom 1992

Director: David Attwood

Certificate

15

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

Channel 4 TV

Producer

Eric Fellner

Co-producer

Nicky Kentish Barnes

Production Co-ordinator

Karin Padgham

Production Manager

Chris Harvey

Location Manager

Angus More Gordon

Casting

Suzanne Crowley

Gilly Poole

Assistant Directors

Chris Newman

Carl Oprey

Ben Howarth

Ben Johnson

Screenplay

Harwant Bains

Director of Photography

Nic Knowland

In colour

Editor

Martin Walsh

Production Designer

Caroline Hanania

Art Director

Kave Naylor

Scenic Artists

Kate Read

Gillian Campbell

Special Effects Supervisor

Tom Harris

Special Effects

Any Effects

Music

Dominic Miller

Music performed by

Dominic Miller

Barry Kinder

Walter Wray

David Heath

Honky Tonk Cowboys

performed by

Clem Clompson

Naveen Andrews

Hugh Burns

Steve Pearce

Charlie Morgan

Songs

"Love Wore a Halo

(Back Before the War)",

"Anyone Can Be

Somebody's Fool"

by Nanci Griffith,

performed by Rebecca

Price; "The River" by

Victoria Shaw, Garth

Brooks, performed by

Rebecca Price; "No 29"

by Steve Earle,

performed by Naveen

Andrews; "I Ain't Ever

Satisfied" by Steve

Earle, performed by

Julian Littman, Naveen

Andrews; "Guitars and

Cadillacs" by Dwight

Yoakam, performed by

Julian Littman; "Honky

Tonk Man" by Johnny

Horton, Howard

Hausey, Tillman

Franks, performed

by Dwight Yoakam;

"Fearless Heart",

"Nowhere Road"

by and performed by

Steve Earle; "Akhan Nal

Akhan" performed by

Awaara; "Desert Storm"

by Farook Shamsher,

Haroon Shamsher,

performed by Joi

Costume Design

Trisha Biggar

Wardrobe Supervisor

Louise Page

Make-up

Aileen Seaton

Heather Jones

Titles/Opticals

The Optical

Partnership

Supervising Sound Editor

Glenn Freemantle

Sound Editor

Peter Elliott

Sound Recordist

Chris Munro

ADR Recordist

John Bateman

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Dean Humphreys

Production Consultant

Harwant Bains

Stunt Co-ordinator

Stuart St Paul

Stunts

Ellie Bertram

Andy Bradford

Frank Henson

Tom Lucy

Cast

Naveen Andrews

Zaf Ayub

Sarita Choudhury

Rifat

Ronny Jhutti

Kay Ayub

Ravi Kapoor

Ali Ayub

Ameet Chana

Gurdeep

Bhasker

Jagdeep

Lalita Ahmed

Mrs Ayub

Shaun Scott

Tony

Neran Persaud

Nrinder Dhudwar

Parv Bancel

Tappers

Paul Bhattacharjee

Amir

Dinesh Shukla

Rakesh

Lou Hirsch

Hank Goldstein

Rolf Saxon

Yehudi

Gurdial Sira

Uncle Liaquat

Jamila Massey

Mrs Khan

Kaleem Janjua

Mr Patel

Adam Dean

Martin Dean

Ninja Boys

Mark Anthony Newman

Ellroy

Race Davies

Receptionist

Jim Barclay

Mr Litt

Christopher Quinn

Engineer

Kevin Elyot

Solicitor

Elaine Donnelly

Ticket Clerk

Awaara

Bhangra Band

Havoc

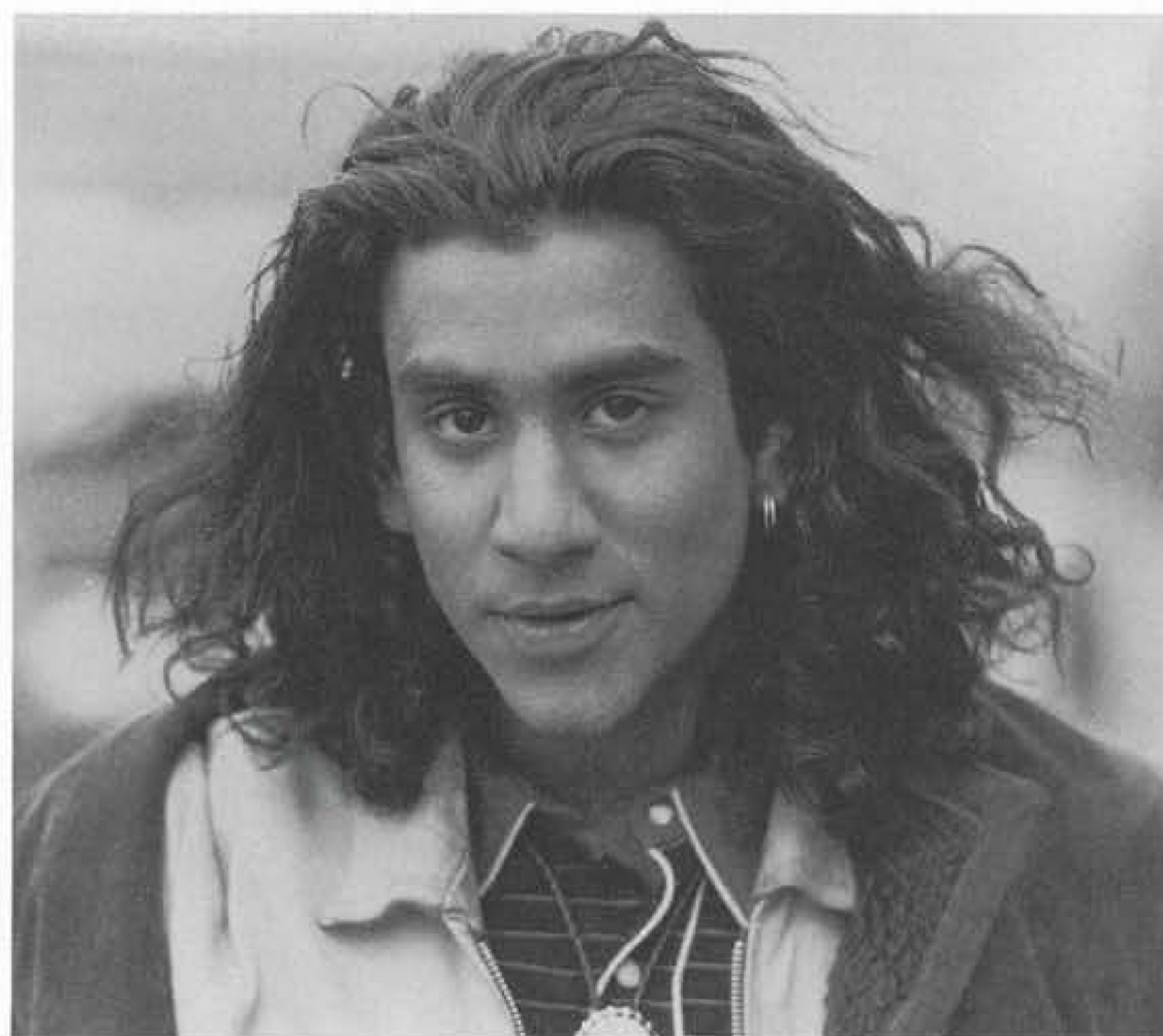
Spook

Madhav Sharma

Ugly Abdul

7,622 feet

85 minutes



The oater limits: Naveen Andrews

● Zaf, Ali and Kay are three Pakistani brothers living in Southall, West London. Zaf has just been fired from his job as a mechanic, Ali is a postman who runs a second-hand car business on the side, and Kay is still at college. In their spare time, the three have formed a country and western band, the Honky Tonk Cowboys. Zaf is determined they will overcome all the obstacles and secure a record contract with a major label.

One afternoon, while shopping in a supermarket dressed in his usual cowboy gear, Zaf meets Rifat, a beautiful young Asian woman. Rifat is unhappily married to a white cab driver, Tony, who regularly beats her up; Zaf immediately falls for her. Zaf's uncle agrees to hire him as an apprentice butcher; a vegetarian, Zaf reluctantly takes the job because his mother is losing faith in him, and is threatening to go back to Pakistan. He puts his job in jeopardy by leaving his Shepherd's Market stall to run after Rifat, trying to persuade her to leave her husband. When he finds out she is a keen Nanci Griffith fan, he asks her to become lead singer in his group.

Eventually, Rifat does leave her husband, moves in with Zaf and the brothers, and joins their band. After a few rehearsals, their manager Jag books them a gig at an Irish pub in North London. This proves a big success. They record a demo tape which Jag sends to Wild West, an important country record company.

Meanwhile, the brothers' mother, disappointed with life in Britain, has sold her house to Zaf's cousin and arch-enemy, Ugly Abdul. She gives the boys a cheque for £20,000 and leaves them to fend for themselves. The brothers are delighted when Wild West express enthusiasm for their demo. Convinced their luck has changed, they visit the record company with Rifat in tow; but Wild West are not interested in the Honky Tonk Cowboys at all, and want to sign Rifat as a solo artist. At first, Rifat refuses to consider splitting from

the rest of the band, but Zaf insists it is too big an opportunity to be scorned. Refusing to admit defeat, Zaf persuades Ali and Kay to use the money their mother left them to buy three first-class tickets to Nashville. The boys pack their bags, gather their instruments, put their beloved rottweiler in quarantine, and head for Heathrow.

● Relentlessly cheerful, *Wild West* eschews state-of-the-nation sermonizing, and instead celebrates the hopes and dreams of its irrepressible hero, with his natty line in boots, waistcoats and stetsons, and determination to make it all the way to Nashville, whatever it takes. Like all self-respecting cowboys, Zaf refuses to kow-tow to anyone. His defiant attitude is clear from the outset: working as a mechanic, pestered by a curmudgeonly customer to speed up repairs to a vehicle, his response is to stencil "Fuck You" on the car's paintwork. This is less an idle insult than a statement of principle. The "Fuck You" philosophy, the programme notes portentously declare, "transcends race and country and is the spirit behind the film."

Wild West manages the delicate feat of both celebrating and parodying the Western's lawless frontier values, endorsing rugged individualism, but distancing itself from the worst excesses of John Wayne-style machismo. Zaf is no redneck. His vision of the Wild West is based on the heart-tugging lyrics of Nanci Griffith and Steve Earle songs. Fuelled by its rousing country and western soundtrack, the movie gallops along at breathless pace, allowing nothing to dampen the prevailing mood of febrile optimism. Just as Zaf refuses to become down-hearted at the never-ending series of misfortunes which plague him and his brothers, the movie refuses to be bogged down by polemics. It briefly touches on issues of class and racism without ever stopping for long enough to examine them: hardships are glamorized, either made the stuff which

any self-respecting cowboy has to face as a matter of course, or treated as the raw material for new country rock ballads, but seldom addressed as social problems.

The film-makers turn their shabby corner of Southall into an almost glamorous frontier town, where modern-day outlaws drive in open-top cars or disappear over the horizon in buses instead of stagecoaches. Unlike the spate of 80s British movies – among them *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, *Empire State* and *The Last of England* – which famously enraged the Thatcherite historian Norman Stone with their downbeat critique of Maggie's Britain, *Wild West* is short on anger and analysis. It merely observes, making its points obliquely, if at all. In its quirkiness, its harnessing of the low-budget British movie with the Western, it even harkens back to the lost world of Ealing comedy, a world which Stone relished when confronted with the "grim concrete" and "urban decay" depicted by Jarman, Peck, Frears and Kureishi. Still, despite its lack of bite, *Wild West* at least offers an Asian vision of Britain, rather than a nostalgic hymn to Michael Balcon's cosy Arcadia.

In some ways, it is a relief that the film dispenses with its "sociological baggage," aiming more for comedy than for comment, but *Wild West*'s cheerfulness occasionally verges on inanity. Scriptwriter Harwant Bains admits to being influenced by *Repo Man*, and as in Alex Cox's picture, there are stolen cars, hapless hoodlums, a picaresque approach to violence, and a tendency to fetishize post-industrial landscapes, wastelands and rubbish dumps and the like as giant playgrounds. Director David Attwood's style is frenetic; the film abounds in slapstick, chases and visual gags, most of which work, some of which don't. But there is never time to dwell on the leaden moments.

The one character who stands apart from the anarchic comedy is Zaf's mother. The long-suffering Mrs Ayub, living in a terraced house, increasingly bewildered by both British society and her children's attitude, would warrant a film on her own. She is torn between loyalty to her family, to her adopted nation, and to the place she still feels is her homeland. Zaf's loyalty, though, lies neither with Britain nor with Pakistan, but with country and western in general, and Steve Earle in particular. The film-makers don't overly dwell on Mrs Ayub's plight, perhaps considering it too sombre for the light-hearted mood they are trying to strike.

Wild West is boosted by very engaging performances from Naveen Andrews and Sarita Choudhury, and has a fine array of eccentric character turns. Colourful, packed with comic detail, it certainly works well as a feel-good movie along the lines of *The Commitments*. But the whole affair sometimes seems too glib and good-humoured, and is undermined by Attwood and Bains' refusal to treat their material at all seriously.

Geoffrey Macnab

RE-RELEASE

Yukinojo Henge (An Actor's Revenge)

Japan 1962

Director: Kon Ichikawa

Certificate
PG

Distributor
BEI

Production Company
Daiei Kyoto

Producer
Masaichi Nagata

Production Manager
Tadao Murakami

Planning
Kon Ichikawa

Editor
Komei Fujii

Assistant Directors
Tomio Takamori

Assistant Directors
Akira Inoue

Assistant Directors
Masuya Nakamura

Screenplay
Natto Wada

Screenplay
Based on the Asahi

Screenplay
newspaper serial

Screenplay
by Otokichi Mikami

Screenplay
and the screenplay

Screenplay
by Daisuke Ito,

Screenplay
Teinosuke Kinugasa

Director of Photography
Setsuo Kobayashi

Director of Photography
DaieiScope

Colour
Daiei-color

Lighting
Kenichi Okamoto

Colour Technician
Toshio Kajitani

Editor
Shigeo Nishida

Art Director
Yoshinobu Nishioka

Costume Adviser
Yoshio Ueno

Music
Japanese:

Music
Tamekichi Mochizuki

Music
Ancient:

Music
Yahichi Takezawa

Music
Additional:

Music
Yasushi Akutagawa

Music
Masao Yagi

Choreography
Action:

Choreography
Shohei Miyauchi

Choreography
Stage:

Choreography
Kangoro Fujima

Collaborators
Kazuo Ikehiro

Collaborators
Senkichi Takeda

Collaborators
Hiroyo Kato

Sound Recordist
Gen Otani

Sound Effects
Noburu Kurashima

Sound Effects
10,170 feet

Sound Effects
113 minutes

Sound Effects
Subtitles

Cast
Kazuo Hasegawa

Cast
Yukinojo Nakamura/

Cast
Yamitaro the Thief

Cast
Fujiko Yamamoto

Cast
Ohatsu

Cast
Ayako Wakao

Cast
Namiji

Cast
Eiji Funakoshi

Cast
Heima Kadokura

Cast
Narutoshi Hayashi

Cast
Mukuzu, Ohatsu's

Cast
Partner

Cast
Eijiro Yanagi

Cast
Hiromi-ya

Cast
Chusha Ichikawa

Cast
Kikunojo Nakamura

Cast
Ganjiro Nakamura

Cast
Sansai Dobe

Cast
Saburo Date

Cast
Kawaguchi-ya

Cast
Jun Hamamura

Cast
Isshosai

Cast
Kikue Mori

Cast
Cruel Old Woman

Cast
Masayoshi Kikuno

Cast
Yukinojo's Father

Cast
Raizo Ichikawa

Cast
Hirutaro

Cast
Shintaro Katsu

Cast
Hojin, Fugitive from

Cast
Prison Island

Cast
Yutaka Nakamura

Cast
Townsmen

Cast
Chitose Maki

Cast
Townswoman

Cast
Toshiro Chiba

Cast
Ronin

Cast
Koichi Mizuhara

Cast
Dobe's Man

Cast
Tadashi Kato

Cast
Shogun's Retainer

Cast
Eigoro Onoe

Cast
Shogun

Cast
Shiro Otsuji

Cast
Tokio Oki

Cast
Civil Guardsmen

Cast
Musei Tokugawa

Cast
Narrator

Cast
Hajime Koshigawa

Cast
Akira Shiga

Cast
Gen Kimura

Cast
Takeo Inoue

Cast
Takeshi Yabuya

Cast
Jun Arimura

Cast
Akira Konami

Cast
Keiko Koyanagi

Japan, 1836. Performing in Edo with Kikunojo Nakamura's kabuki troupe, star female impersonator Yukinojo catches up with the three men who ruined his parents and drove them to suicide in Nagasaki 20 years earlier. The leader, Sansai Dobe, is now a shogunate official; his henchmen Kawaguchi-ya and Hiromi-ya are merchants jockeying for position as suppliers to the court. Yukinojo determines to initiate his long-awaited revenge by seducing Dobe's daughter Namiji, a favourite of the Shogun. Meanwhile, in the Edo underworld, master thief Yamitaro's reputation is under challenge from the man-hating Ohatsu and the inept young Hirutaro. Rescuing Yukinojo from a mugging at the hands of the renegade Heima,

Yamitaro learns of the actor's revenge mission and becomes his secret protector

Namiji falls deeply in love with Yukinojo, who aims to cause her father's downfall by stealing her away from the Shogun. Yukinojo also exploits the rivalry between Kawaguchi-ya and Hiromi-ya by urging the latter to sell off his huge stocks of rice at low prices; this will stave off an incipient famine and win him respect in court, but will also decimate the value of Kawaguchi-ya's rice holdings. Ruined, Kawaguchi-ya attacks Hiromi-ya and sets fire to his rice warehouse. Hiromi-ya strangles him and turns to Dobe for help in rebuilding his business. But Dobe refuses, and so Hiromi-ya tries to kidnap Namiji (who has fled the court in search of Yukinojo) – only to be stabbed to death by her as she fends him off.

Feverish, Namiji falls prey to a cruel old woman who wants to force her into prostitution; she is saved by the 'honourable' wanted criminal Hojin, who places her in Yamitaro's care. Yamitaro summons Yukinojo, who is touched by her genuine devotion and is with her when she dies. Yukinojo then confronts Dobe and reveals his true identity. Guilt-stricken and destroyed by Namiji's death, Dobe takes poison. Yamitaro decides to go straight, and Ohatsu (who has mellowed enough to consider him a prospective husband) threatens to follow his example – leaving the criminal field free for Hirutaro. Yukinojo gives his final performance with Kikunojo's troupe and vanishes from Edo.

Yukinojo Henge (literally, *Yukinojo the Phantom*) has always been taken far more seriously in the West than it was in Japan. Western commentators, generally taken with its florid exoticism, admire everything from the play with 'Scope framing to the perversity of the love scenes and the quasi-Brechtian elements of deliberate artifice; most Japanese critics cannot get past the project's fundamental absurdity. The original story was written for newspaper serialisation by Otokichi Mikami (1891-1944), and it was first adapted as a movie in 1935 by Teinosuke Kinugasa, who had begun

his own career as a female impersonator on stage and in silent movies. Kinugasa's adaptation starred Kazuo Hasegawa (1908-84) in the dual roles of the effeminate Yukinojo and the dashingly virile Yamitaro; it was an off-beat star vehicle by Shochiku's standards of the 30s, and one of Kinugasa's more intriguing entertainments. But it was not an obvious candidate for a remake nearly three decades later, least of all with the ageing Hasegawa reprising his dual roles. The Daiei management hit on the idea of the remake as a way of celebrating Hasegawa's 300th screen appearance (the opening caption proclaims this motive), but they insured themselves commercially by surrounding him with five of their most popular contract stars, some of them squeezed into fleeting cameos. And they assigned the challenge of bringing the hopelessly dated, kitschy material to life to their most reliable contract director, Kon Ichikawa, whose films routinely turned up in the annual *Kinema Junpo* 'Ten Best' list.

Ichikawa responded, characteristically, by having fun. Far from trying to update or modernise the material, he gleefully accentuates its creakiness by using a battery of archaic visual and dramatic devices: iris effects, overtly theatrical settings and staging, characters who muse aloud to themselves, lurid lighting changes and so on. (He even enlists the well-known veteran *benshi* Musei Tokugawa to speak the closing narration.) Equally, he does nothing to disguise the plot's blatantly opportunistic contrivances but plays them up in a series of weird disjunctions. He thinks nothing of slipping in a brief disquisition (complete with roller-caption) on the rice riots of the 1830s to help explain the manipulations of the commodity market; indeed, he relishes the incongruity of this gesture towards historical realism by placing it between a scene in which Ohatsu flirts with Yamitaro to a score of cocktail jazz and one in which Yukinojo stokes Namiji's forbidden ardour to a score of lush Hollywood strings. In the context of early 60s cinema, these archaisms and crashing gears had an almost avant-garde thrust in the eyes of Western viewers. For a Japanese ►



Clichés and kabuki: Ayako Wakao, Eijiro Yanagi

viewer, though, the sheer density of generic clichés prevents the film from transcending its pulp origins.

At this remove, it's easy to see a parallel between Ichikawa's work on *Yukinojo Henge* and, say, Seijun Suzuki's exactly contemporary work on *yakuza* thrillers for the Nikkatsu company, which takes a similar delight in pushing genre conventions to absurdist extremes and makes equally inventive use of theatrical sets and mannerist widescreen compositions. Suzuki's films, like *Yukinojo*, have to be seen as responses to a moribund studio system: desperately resourceful attempts to reactivate inert genre material by contract directors who had little or no say over the projects assigned to them. Their valiant efforts to triumph over clueless managements were, of course, doomed: Daiei went bankrupt at the end of the 60s, only a couple of years before Nikkatsu rethought company policy and began producing soft-porn quickies. There is, however, an important difference between Suzuki and Ichikawa. Suzuki, even at his wildest, never tries to subvert the moral and philosophical principles on which his genre movies rest. Ichikawa, in this film at least, goes through the genre motions efficiently but *without commitment*. Since the material has no intrinsic meaning in his eyes, he feels free to turn the movie into a playful aesthetic exercise.

As such, *Yukinojo Henge* is an enjoyably camp but inescapably shallow delight. Mikami's ludicrous premise that Yukinojo should be both a kabuki star and a skilled martial artist (and thus have not one but two substitute father-figures in the actor-manager Kikunojo and the zen monk Isshosai) blurs the traditional Edo-period distinction between actors and men of action and paves the way for some mixing-and-matching of genre conventions. Ichikawa and his screenwriter (and wife) Natto Wada follow Kinugasa's lead in minimising Yukinojo's martial prowess and reassigning most of the swordplay to the macho Yamitaro – a modest concession to credibility that probably led directly to the casting of Hasegawa in both roles – but nearly all their visual and dramatic coups spring from the idea of putting a kabuki *onnagata* into unexpected contexts. They cannot think of much to do with the Daiei guest stars: Raizo Ichikawa, in particular, is thrown away in the insufficiently comic role of the would-be thief Hirutaro, although Shintaro Katsu makes the most of his walk-on as Namiji's saviour. But they do well by their lead women, and their rethinking of kabuki stage conventions in cinematic terms is unfailingly witty. Ironically, the one real weakness is Hasegawa himself. Perfect as the thoroughly feminised Yukinojo, he is too flabby and indolent at the age of 55 to be believable as the wall-shinning, rooftop-squatting thief Yamitaro.

Tony Rayns

(This film was first reviewed in the MFB Vol. 34 No. 400, May 1967)

TV FILM

The Cormorant

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Peter Markham

Distributor BBC TV	Production Designer Ray Price
Production Company Holmes Associates production for BBC TV Wales	Music John Lunn
Executive Producers Andrew Holmes Mark Shivas Ruth Caleb	Costume Designer Jakki Winfield
Producer Ruth Kenley-Letts	Make-up Marina Monios
Associate Producer Paul Frift	Sound Editor Paul Jeffries
Production Associate Anji Dyer	Sound Recordists Tim Ricketts Richard Dyer
Production Co-ordinator Alison Carter	Stunt Co-ordinator Gareth Milne
Location Managers Leighton Davies Maurice Hunter	Cormorant Handlers Tony Durkin Lloyd Buck
Nature Unit Director Nigel Marven	Cast
Assistant Directors Chris Le Grys Sali Davies	Ralph Fiennes John Helen Schlesinger Mary Thomas Williams Tom
Screenplay Peter Ransley Based on the novel by Stephen Gregory	Buddug Morgan Jenny Derek Hutchinson Dave
Director of Photography Ashley Rowe	Karl Francis Uncle Ian
In colour	Dylan Roberts Glyn
Underwater Photography Tony Miller	Mici Plwm Brian
Camera Operator Alan Hayward	Ray Gravell Michael
Steadicam Operator Dennis Kington	Stewart Jones Aled Owen
Visual Effects Stuart Murdoch	Gwilym Evans Young John
Graphic Designer Mel Burgum	
Editor Tim Kruidenberg	
	8,003 feet (at 25fps) 88 minutes

John Talbot, a writer, moves with his wife Mary and young son Tom to a remote house in Snowdonia, inherited from his uncle Ian along with the uncle's pet cormorant. When he tries to get rid of the unmanageable bird, Ian's solicitor reveals that by the terms of the will they may lose the house if the bird is not cared for. John calls the cormorant Archie (though it turns out to be female), takes it for exercise tied to a rope, and makes less and less progress with his writing. After the bird kills their cat, Mary insists on taking Tom away for two weeks, leaving John to, in her words, "sort it out".

John tries to kill the bird with an axe, but fails. He releases it, but it returns, and his obsession with Archie grows. He also becomes haunted by childhood memories of Uncle Ian, supposedly found dead in a boat with the cormorant, his eyes pecked out. John buys the bird a new cage, and lets it catch fish in the cold December sea, where the bird's cunning almost causes him to drown. When Mary returns a day earlier than planned, she finds Archie in their bedroom and the house in disarray.

After Tom wanders into the bird's unlocked cage at night, Mary and son take off again. John grows increasingly drunk and disoriented, but on Mary's return lunges at the bird in a frenzied and fatal attack. Mary wants the body

burned, to prove to Tom that the bird is no more. A burning log from the bonfire lands on the house, but John wants the house and its memories consumed. Tom clutches a charred feather as it falls through the air.

At the height of the turmoil in *The Cormorant*, with his home, marriage and sanity near collapse, the hero sits at his computer, tapping out his recipe for a "painted devil": "Take some uneasy indefinable feelings, add a large quantity of stress, mix with alcohol and simmer in firelight". In adapting Stephen Gregory's novel, director Peter Markham follows the recipe as best he can, given the cramped confines of a Screen Two film and the nature of the devil under review: an amalgam of four sea birds trained and manipulated by the BBC Nature Unit. Alas, the recipe does not stretch far.

Things bode ill as soon as the cormorant lands on the screen. We get a point-of-view shot from inside the crate, coupled with ominous growls from the soundtrack synthesizer. Markham's summonings of "uneasy indefinable feelings" become more ambitious as the story advances and the cormorant runs riot, but they never grow much more persuasive.

The large quantity of stress is the lot of Mary, John's wife, who sees the reality of the bird's behaviour and its effect on their home life where John sees only dark enchantment. She seems blind, however, to her weak-willed husband's growing obsession; and Helen Schlesinger's bleating performance only exacerbates audience annoyance.

Alcohol is the preserve of John, the bookish husband increasingly drawn into the cormorant's vicious world. Fresh from scowling on the Yorkshire moors in *Wuthering Heights*, Fiennes wears the stubble, slurred speech and hollowed eyes like a seasoned pro; though the childhood memories of Uncle Ian, styled in pale slow-motion, give the most garbled reasons for his disturbed psyche.

Firelight? There are flickering flames inside the dark house, but Ashley Rowe's photography only comes into its own once hero and bird take the air and water on the bleak Welsh coast. In one respect at least *The Cormorant* casts an authentic chill, with its picture of a closed, often hostile Welsh community. In other ways, the novel has made a dull, unedifying TV drama: it's never much fun seeing irritating characters get what they deserve.

Geoff Brown



Up before the beak: Ralph Fiennes

TV FILM

Femme Fatale

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Udayan Prasad

Distributor BBC TV	Cast Sophia Diaz
Production Company BBC Films	Maddalena
For Screen 2	Donald Pleasence
Executive Producer Mark Shivas	Victor
Producer Kenith Trodd	Simon Callow
Associate Producer Julie Scott	Vicar Ronnie
Location Managers Linda Buxton	Antonella Squadrito
Paul Judges	Mama
Assistant Directors Brett Fallis	Roberto Nobile
Clare Nicholson	Papa
Jamie Annett	Ricardo Velez
Screenplay Simon Gray	Paolo
Director of Photography Graham Frake	Jacqueline Tong
In colour	Mary-Jane
Visual Effects Graham Brown	James Fleet
Graphic Designer Rosalind Dallas	Algie
Editor Ken Pearce	Colin Welland
Production Designer Grenville Horner	Harty
Music Stephen Warbeck	Patsy Rowlands
Costume Design Kate O'Farrell	Mrs Harty
Make-up Deanne Turner	Jason Durr
Sound Editors Jane Greenwood	Davey Harty
Debbie Pragnell	Margery Mason
Sound Recordists Paul Hamblin	Mrs Armitage
Albert Bailey	Rosalie Crutchley
Stunt Co-ordinator Gareth Milne	Mrs Birt
	Anna Mazzotti
	Waitress
	Al Ashton
	Stewart Harwood
	Cops
	7,000 feet (at 25fps) 74 minutes

Maddalena (Maddy) is a good Sicilian girl, harassed by local casanova Paolo. Her father defends the family honour with a gun; Paolo kills her mother and the two men shoot each other. Maddy leaves for London before Paolo's family seek retribution. Meanwhile, deep in Devon, where Martin and Daisy Harty sell home-made jam in Meryton village stores, Cousin Mary and husband Algie take blind Uncle Victor for a picnic. Posing for photographs, Victor falls to his death from a cliff top, while Mary and Algie look the other way and inherit Victor's garage.

Taking their son Davey to London for a holiday, Daisy and Martin go to an Italian restaurant where Maddy works as a waitress, and Davey falls in love with her. There is a riot outside, and Martin and Davey try to impress Maddy by intervening, causing Daisy to have a heart attack and die. Maddy comforts Davey, and they get married.

Maddy comes to work in Meryton stores, and Algie, bent on seduction, starts dropping in for choc ices. Martin warns him off, sending Maddy upstairs to Davey. They try to make love but Davey is impotent. Frustrated, she rushes out, and Algie picks her up in his truck. He claims that he if he goes home unsatisfied he will kill his wife for love of Maddy; horrified, she kisses him, just as Ronnie, the local vicar, arrives.

That night Martin declares love to

Maddy, but she fights him off. Next day she gives Algie a tape on which she has recorded a passionate message in Italian, but he cannot understand it. Maddy goes into the church, where she confides her troubles to Ronnie. On his advice she tells Martin to keep his hands to himself. Davey overhears and attacks his father, who rips open Maddy's dress; horrified, Davey has a fatal heart attack, just as Ronnie appears. After Davey's funeral, Maddy asks Algie to divorce his wife. He agrees, but is angry when she refuses sex before marriage. Martin sees Algie and Maddy together. Infuriated, he poisons a pot of jam which he gives to Algie. When Maddy returns to the shop, Martin rips her dress again and then stabs himself, consumed by lust and guilt. At that moment, Ronnie again appears.

Ronnie conducts Martin's funeral, and then visits Mary. She tells him she dislikes sex and is happy that Algie has lovers. Eating a sandwich made with the poisoned jam, she falls dead on the sofa. The police question Algie. They find and translate Maddy's tape, which incriminates Algie by begging him not to murder his wife. Leaping through a window to escape, Algie is run down and killed by Ronnie's on-coming car. The vicar takes Maddy's hand and they experience a flash of blinding light, after which they live in domestic bliss. The shop, now an Italian delicatessen, is filled with local children who sing with Maddy and Ronny to soothe their baby to sleep.

"This body here, it makes English and Scots do mad things," proclaims Maddy, clasping her bosom. The sex appeal of the pure but voluptuous Italian has a literal knock-'em-dead effect on British men, causing the farcical decimation of the entire Harty family. This single running joke makes for an uneasy mixture of black comedy and *Carry On* buffoonery; when Maddy's breasts pop out (and they *do* pop out), someone dies, at which point the vicar walks in to a wide-eyed, braless Barbara Windsor stare. Sophia Diaz's bosom seems to play a greater role than her character. Maddy has little more to do than look childishly uncomprehending or compassionate in turn, but never has a grieving widow gone to a funeral so décolletée.

Simon Callow narrates *Femme Fatale* in knowingly understated, gently ironic tones, giving the film a Jane Austen style that works best when it makes its Miss Marple-style village institutions incongruous. The Protestant vicar hears Maddy's confession from behind *The Times*, a picture of the Pope beaming down from the front page, and recommends divorce. Such comic subtleties are what writer Simon Gray does best, as when the detective misses the implications of a photo of Victor on the cliff top, accordion in hand, and instead arrests Algie for a murder he didn't commit. The film wants us to laugh at the Hartys' failure to live and love in the Sicilian way – operatically. However, any poignant



Amore al pesto: Sophia Diaz

reverberations are muffled by stylistic heavy-handedness. The narration debunks its own operatic moments, turning them into melodrama: Martin's grief and lust are overlaid with a banal story about the Hartys' cherry jam fiddle at the cash-and-carry.

Getting the British to laugh at themselves has always been seen as a failsafe comic recipe, but *Femme Fatale* sadly lacks the satirical edge of a *Life Is Sweet*. The Hartys may be devoid of romance, but their charmlessness fails to make you wince. Gray's shorthand images of risible 'commonness' – Algie's truck, Davey's *Moonwalker* posters – are lost in the air of benign affability exuded by Ronnie's narration. Blackness becomes blandness, swallowed up by the single-minded construction of a middle-class social vision.

The loving care with which village scenes are usually filmed in high-profile television drama is saved for the final Italianisation of Ronnie. His blissful domesticity with Maddy in the well-stocked delicatessen is reminiscent of nothing so much as a Dolmio advert. Amongst the hanging salami, the baby in Ronnie's arms shows that he is up to Italian Maddy; he is, after all, the only man who has gazed on her breasts and survived. This may be little England, but Ronnie has a big cosmopolitan heart; Martin suffered Maddy's "eye-tie pasties", but Ronnie takes his pasta *al pesto*.

Not that this soft-focus idyll isn't tongue-in-cheek. Gray plays up the Italian clichés just as he does the British, but both script and camera are clearly seduced by his Maddalena. The final shot looks through the delicatessen window at Callow (always a smashing vicar) in his Forsterian room with a view, interminably struck with the romance of Italy. *Femme Fatale* has a French title, an Italian heroine and thick West Country accents, but is no composite Eurodrama. Just as the untranslated Italian dialogue is so neatly woven into the story, it is an ode to a middle-class dream of a continental England where village stores sell not sham home-made jam but real Italian ice-cream in sugar cones. This may still be Devon, but there's no Wall's Cornish Vanilla in Maddy's freezer.

Lucy Richer

TV FILM

The Long Roads

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Tristram Powell

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

BBC Films

For Screen 2

Executive Producers

John McGrath

Mark Shivas

Producer

Peter Kendal

Associate Producer

Daphne Spink

Location Managers

Barry Beckett

Tim Stevenson

Casting

Irene Lamb

Assistant Directors

Dermot Boyd

P.J. Simpson

Melanie Panario

Screenplay

John McGrath

Director of Photography

Steve Saunderson

In colour

Graphic Designer

Rosalind Dallas

Editor

Roy Sharman

Production Designer

Don Taylor

Art Director

Jim Holloway

Music

John Altman

Costume Design

Elizabeth Walker

Make-up

Caroline Noble

Sound Editor

Edward Bazalgette

Sound Recordists

Aad Wirtz

Clive Derbyshire

Cast

Edith Macarthur

Kitty McVurrich

Robert Urquhart

Peter McVurrich

John Buick

Ali

Paul Morrow

Jack

Paul Sykes

Angus

Sam Davies

Bernie

Bill Riddoch

Donnie

Ralph Riach

Doctor Sutherland

John McGlynn

Iain McVurrich

Anne Marie Timoney

Mandy McVurrich

Rory John Mackay

Gregor McVurrich

Iain James Mackay

William McVurrich

Jimmy Chisholm

Colin

Matthew Costello

Andy

David Meldrum

Charlie

Martin McCordie

Terry

Michelle Fairley

Fiona Gibbons

Robert Rawles

Alan Gibbons

James Penrose

Johnny Gibbons

Tony James

Jim Gibbons

Ged McKenna

Des

Paul Codman

Paul

John Owens

Collins

Andrew Schofield

Eddie

Kevin McMonagle

Roddie McVurrich

Debra Gillett

Pat McVurrich

Bhasker

Yussuf

Jane Whittenshaw

Mrs Gate

Maureen Beattie

Deidre Kopanski

Shaughan Seymour

George Kopanski

Louise Beattie

Mairi McVurrich

Anne-Marie Marriott

Stephanie

Andy Rashleigh

Alf

Jack Frost

Hotel Doorman

Metin Yenal

Joseph

Brian Miller

Hotel Porter

Ozzie Yue

Jimmy

Helmut Sebastian

Dining Room Waiter

8,003 feet

(at 25fps) 87 minutes

Old couple Peter and Kitty McVurrich lead their separate existences on the idyllic isle of Skye, she taking care of the house, he conducting monosyllabic conversations in the local pub about his life at sea. The news of Kitty's terminal cancer prompts them to take one last trip around Britain for her to say good-bye to their five children. Among the run-down tower blocks of Glasgow their policeman son Iain is fighting a hopeless battle against crime while his disillusioned wife conducts a loveless affair with one of his colleagues. Unable to articulate his response to the news of his mother's cancer, he hides in the bedroom as they sneak out one morning to continue their journey. In Liverpool, their daughter Fiona can only make ends meet to support her unemployed husband Alan and their two children by secretly working as a 'masseuse'. In Peterborough their son Roddie, a lonely yuppie who feels more comfortable with his electronic toys than with his alienated wife, is devastated when he hears the bad news. Stuck in a childless marriage and with a mother who is about to die, he faces his mortality. In London, Deidre, married to a wealthy stockbroker, has a caterer on standby to provide the food for her parents and books them into an expensive hotel because she is afraid to unsettle some clients they are expecting for dinner with the old people's presence.

Peter and Kitty have started to get to know each other again on their travels, which they have now reclassified as the honeymoon they never had. That night, prompted by watching *Temptations of Tina* on the hotel's video channel, they make love for the first time in years. Their drop-out daughter Mairi turns up at the hotel, outraged that Deidre has shunted her parents into an impersonal hotel and invites them to stay at her small council flat. But, Kitty having met the last of her children, their journey is over. They return home where she dies in peace, Peter looking forward to join her when his time comes.

Looking over the picturesque landscape of Skye while his wife is dying after their long journey, Peter McVurrich asks God, "How do you make the world so wonderful and then make us leave it?" The question is ironic, considering what he and Kitty have witnessed on their journey. From Glasgow to Liverpool, Peterborough to London, the reality their children have grown up in is one of violence and television, unfulfilled ambitions and poverty, empty wealth and alienation from their own children.

The journey Kitty and Peter take is even more disconcerting than the similar quest undertaken by Marcello Mastroianni in Giuseppe Tornatore's *Stanno Tutti Bene*. As both parents take the trip here, Mastroianni's lie to his dying wife upon his return that "everybody's fine" is not a possibility. The only two of their offspring who may have achieved some sort of happiness are Deidre ►

◀ and Mairi in London, but we can't be sure of this, because as the journey progresses southwards and the children's wealth increases, they also become caricatures as they start to give way for the re-emerging romance between their parents. In the beginning much thought goes into depicting the many characters three-dimensionally, but once the couple hit London, familiar tokens like the over-the-top caterer and impersonal conversations over entry-phones are used to make the points.

Unavoidably episodic by nature, the film is held together by the couple's blossoming relationship. Close to the end of their life together, they finally dare to ask each other questions like "Why did you never kiss me properly?" ("I was afraid I might catch something") or "Did you go with other women?" ("Nothing serious"). Their finding each other at such a late stage results not in bitterness over the lost years, but in true happiness for the first time. One of the saddest scenes is when Roddie, in need of sexual consolation from his wife (who, interestingly enough, uses "come to Mummy" as a sexual invitation), tries to make love to her without a condom, presumably to continue the family line; but she literally throws him out of bed. He will never have the chance to go on a journey like his parents.

It is the women who are in control in *The Long Roads*. While they either support their family, dominate their spouses or disregard their wish for children, Peter drags their men to the local boozer, offering his clumsy philosophy which isn't much help to anybody. It is almost too late when he realises that he too can have something in common with a member of the opposite sex. His wife has been waiting for him to discover this for decades.

If Peter and Kitty's children are lost causes, their grandchildren look an even more hopeless generation. In the North they are fed television if they are not on the streets beating each other up. In the South they either remain unconceived or, in Deidre's case, are present only on a video played to their grandmother as they have been sent off to boarding school, presumably to minimise interference with their parents' life.

That old people are allowed to have sex in a film is a welcome occurrence, even though it takes place off-screen and has to be introduced by a young 'Tina' on the hotel video channel showing Kitty how to have oral sex. The last taboo still has to be broken.

Screenwriter John McGrath may to an extent be guilty of creating an artificial family to illustrate his point, as this wide variety of social groups will be hard to find in any one family. But this is a mere quibble, as *The Roads Home* heads straight for the heart and does so very successfully, tackling a difficult subject with sensitivity, intelligence and understatement. It only just falls short of fulfilling all of its high ambitions.

Martin Wagner

TV FILM

Man to Man

United Kingdom 1992

Director: John Maybury

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

Basilisk

For BBC Films

Executive Producers

George Faber

Ben Gibson

Producer

James MacKay

Associate Producers

David Blaikley

Chris Harrison

Production Co-ordinator

Jo Coriat

Production Manager

Yvonne Tucker

Location Manager

2nd Unit Berlin:

Bjon Koll

Assistant Director

David Lewis

Based on Manfred

Karge's original

screenplay

Jackie Wie Hose

From a translation

by Anthony Vivis

Director of Photography

Dominique Le Riguler

Colour/

Black and White

Camera Operator

2nd Unit Berlin:

Christopher Hughes

Editors

John Maybury

Nigel Hadley

Bruce McKenna

Production Designer

Alan MacDonald

Art Director

Sebastian Sharples

Music

Nigel Holland

Music Performed by

Nigel Holland

Marvin Black

Dean Speedwell

Costume Design

Annie Symons

Make-up

Thelma Mathews

Prosthetics

Graham High

Sound Design

Nigel Holland

Marvin Black

Sound Editor

Marvin Black

ADR

Ted Swanscott

Sound Recordist

Rosie Straker

Sound Re-recordist

Paul Hamblin

Cast

Tilda Swinton

4,625 feet

(at 25fps) 74 minutes

● Berlin, the present. Ella Gericke, an old woman, watches TV in her cramped bed-sitting room. Drinking beer after beer, she reflects on her unusual life. In the early 1930s she was a young woman looking for love. A brief courtship with Max Gericke, a crane operator for the building company Nagel and Sons, ends in marriage. Max, however, has cancer and dies soon after. Ella decides she has no choice but to take over her husband's identity so that she can work at Nagel's and earn some money. She masquerades as Max, hangs out with his workmates and learns masculine ways.

Germany, meanwhile, is turning into a place of unrest with riots erupting on the streets of Berlin. Hitler comes into power and soon war is declared. Now that the men are being sent to war, women are being employed at Nagel's. Max contemplates how he is going to avoid conscription and the tell-tale medical. At the works canteen, Max meets a cook who takes a shine to him, but Max tells her he already has his 'Snow White'. Later the cook turns up at Max's home and asks for sanctuary – she is a 'red' on the run from the SS. 'Max' gives her Ella's passport, his last connection with his past.

Max finds himself working as a concentration camp guard; later he is in the army, where morale is low as the war winds to an end. Just before Germany surrenders, Max tries to escape from the army but is confronted by two SS officers. He explains that he is a woman protecting herself in male guise but then shoots them. After the war Max obtains work as a farm lad, and later returns to a now divided

Berlin. Later, Max works at the 'Plaste und Elaste' factory, making plastic punnets, but when the owner realizes that it is cheaper to employ women than men, Max soon finds himself out of a job.

With five years to go before he can collect his pension, Max notices that Nagel and Sons are looking for crane operators. But now the firm is owned by 'Uncle Sam'. Finally Max retires to his bedsit where he is free at last to be Ella again.

● "Another night of rubbish on the telly." The words flash across the screen at the beginning of *Man to Man*, superimposed over calm pictures of retired folk enjoying a Berlin spring. Video artist John Maybury's adventurous and imaginative adaptation of Manfred Karge's stage play scratches away at the placid surface of contemporary Germany and rumbles through the 'rubbish' of an elderly mind as Ella/Max – sometimes bigotedly ranting, sometimes quietly meditative – reflects on her unorthodox life.

Like an ever-present extra character in this one-hander, a television jitters in the corner, providing the room with its only light while it also buzzes with the off-white noise of canned laughter and other vague, humming electronic sounds. Under lesser direction, Karge's storm of a text could have been transposed into talking-head TV, a mere showcase for Tilda Swinton's mesmerizing performance as she reproduces the range of Ella's personae. First seen wrapped in reptilian prosthetics, like a corpse in a winding sheet of rubber flesh, Ella later appears in a bounty of other cameo guises, from a dapper Clark Gable to a luminously pale and sunken-eyed concentration camp prisoner. But Maybury pushes the boundaries of taped television, moulding and manipulating images as easily as if they were the factory's plastic and elastic. Indeed the medium was never so ectoplasmic.

Raiding the archives, Maybury elucidates the chaotic nature of a memory that brims with the flotsam of a strange past. Monochrome crowds peer into the camera, swastika flags clutched to their chests, while blonde boys in lederhosen hike up alpine paths to jaunty accordion tunes. Later Berlin flashes like a neon America in

the night. This is newsreel Germany calling – a very public state of mind in which history is delivered like so many postcards. Contrasted to this in an intimate 'man to man' talk is Ella/Max's private turmoil. Economic necessity forces Ella underground – literally burying her identity with her husband's body while her passport is stashed under the mattress like ill-gotten booty: "I, my own widow, my late lamented husband, had to be man enough to wear the fucking trousers. Why is being a woman not enough?"

It is a poignant question, but Karge ventures beyond the obvious sexual politics of equality (the play draws on various true cases of women who dressed as men in order to obtain work in Germany during the 1920s). Ella lies dormant, like Snow White, the blameless and slumbering fairy-tale heroine to which *Man to Man* makes constant allusion. With Ella's story, Karge has invented an allegorical tale equal in power and purpose to Grimm's.

As 'Max', Ella slips into another skin, split off and alienated from her true self. In such a way, fascist Germany also interned part of itself as it became a more masculinised and militarised culture. Indeed, 'Max's' progress is paralleled with her country's. At first bandaged up as part of her disguise, 'Max' presents herself as wounded and broken. But then she learns the grotesque postures of a true *Deutscher Mann*, swilling schnapps and guzzling pork – it has to be pork to verify racial 'purity' – into her closely-framed mouth and banging her large wurst of a dildo on the table. Like a drag queen, she passes for a man with the most exaggerated of gestures, her 'gender' determined by so much stuffing down the trousers. And as this clownish man she is her country's hapless fool, speaking in a babble of voices that can represent simultaneously the concentration camp prisoner and the concentration camp guard. Indeed, it is at this particular point in *Man to Man* that Maybury's ghostly layering of images makes its starkest impact, as a vision of Swinton huddled in a coffin-like cell makes way for a grinning 'Max' in the regalia of a Nazi camp guard. These images may seem well worn too. But as Maybury scans a loaded conscience, he recycles a nightmare out of history's clichés.

Lizzie Francke



Ich bin ein Berliner: Tilda Swinton

Seven Songs For Malcolm X

United Kingdom 1993

Director: John Akomfrah

Distributor

Channel 4

Production Company

A Black Audio Film Collective production for Channel 4

Producer

Lina Gopaul

Production Manager

David Lawson

Screenplay

John Akomfrah

Edward George

Director of Photography

Arthur Jafa

In colour

Video 8

Hilda Sealy

Editor

Joy Chamberlain

Production Designer

Susan Dowlatshahi

Music performed by

Drums:

Thurman Barker

Saxophone:

Bill Saxton

Title Design

Chris Allies &

Associates

Sound Design

Trevor Mathison

Sound Recordist

Trevor Mathison

Sound Re-recordists

Peter Hodges

Cast

Darrick Harris

Malcolm X

Danny Carter

Martin Boothe

Byron O. Hurlock

Edward George

Malcolm's Men

Tricia Rose

Malcolm's Mother

Theodore L. Cash

Malcolm's Father

Olamide Faison

Young Malcolm

Tiffany Nelson

Tiffany Tate

Girls

Giancarlo Esposito

Autobiography

Reading

Toni Cade Bambara

Commentary

Coco Fusco

FBI Files Reading

With

Wilfred Little

Betty Shabazz

Spike Lee

Greg Tate

Hassan El-Sayed

Yuri Kochiyama

Thulani Davis

Robin Kelley

Patricia Williams

William Kunstler

Imam Benjamin Karim

A. Peter Bailey

John Henrik Clarke

Peter Goldman

James Farmer

Jan Carew

Malcolm Jarvis

2,080 feet

(at 25fps) 52 minutes

16mm

This documentary on the African-American political leader Malcolm X follows the chronology of his life through the evolution of his beliefs to his assassination at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom in February 1965. As well as Spike Lee, talking during the PR campaign for his film *Malcolm X*, other interviewees include Malcolm's brother Wilfred Little, his wife Betty Shabazz, his friend Malcolm Jarvis (known as 'Shorty'), several who were present at the Audubon Ballroom, and several black historians, writers and critics. The film fixes on the number seven, setting out the course of events in seven episodes. In addition, other short sections – 'The Dying Thoughts Of A Revolutionary', 'Phantoms Of History' – explore continuities threading through the story.

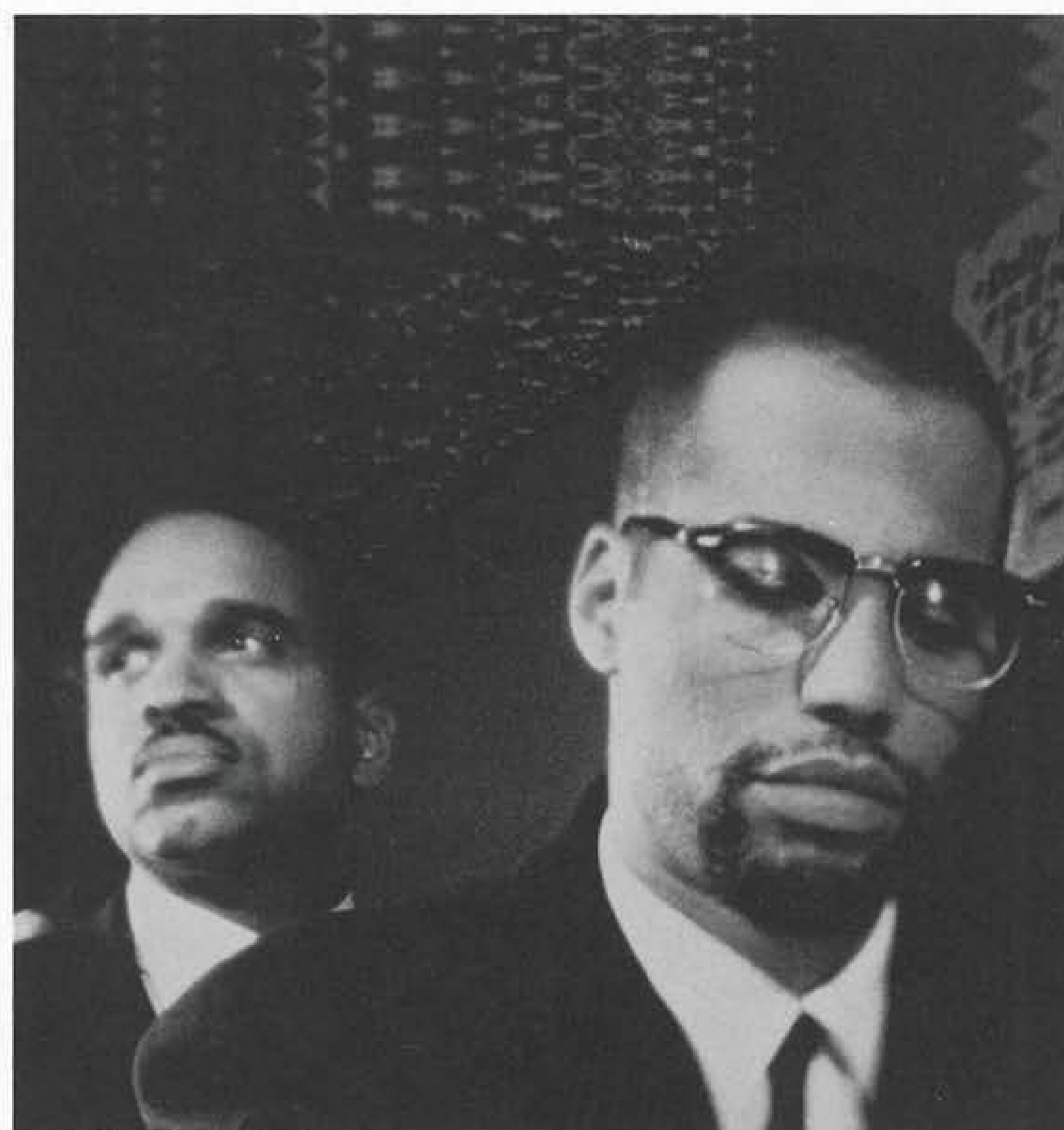
After an introductory section on the assassination as onlookers recall it – dealing with foreboding, prophecy and FBI foreknowledge – and a brief scene-setting look at the media buzz surrounding Lee's film, the first of the seven sections, 'The Seventh Son', examines Malcolm's roots, in particular the fervent Garveyism in his family, his preacher father's political outspokenness and violent death, his Grenada-born mother's activism, harassment and mental breakdown. 'The Seven Years In Seventh Heaven'

summarises Malcolm's Harlem years as a zoot-suited street kid, the story of his move to the Nation of Islam in prison, and his family's role in this conversion. 'The Hour Of The New Negro' ties in his own role in massively expanding the Nation of Islam's reach and significance with the coming to prominence of Civil Rights in American public life; 'Now's The Time' recounts the new possibilities and jealousies that his activism in Harlem begins to awaken, Malcolm's differences with the Civil Rights line and his growing disillusionment with NOI leader Elijah Muhammad and the establishment within the NOI.

'The Hour Of The Knife' begins with JFK's assassination and Malcolm's comments on it about "chickens coming home to roost", Elijah Muhammad's use of this to discipline and silence him, and the break with the NOI. 'The Hour Of Revolution' details his subsequent opening to broad alliances and internationalism, in particular the political links he made in Africa and the formation of his own Afro-American Organisation of Unity. 'The End Is Nigh' returns to his assassination, his promise to expose the NOI, the extensive FBI infiltration of the NOI, real and imagined reasons why he was assassinated, and by whom, and further meditation on why his ghost has returned, and what leaders might be for.

In *Seven Songs*, interviews, new footage, music and tableaux are organised to give weight to those aspects of black culture today that the Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC) have always show concern for: memory, location, mystical coincidence, the inner thoughts and doubts of actors in the drama, and the unexamined political and philosophical divergences and confluences at the heart of black progressive politics. The concentration on the number seven – the "number of vision", as Malcolm's mother Louise Norton described it – helps to excavate a spectral link between Malcolm Little, the seventh son of Earl Little, and another seventh son, Gabriel Prosser (who was involved in his assassination), as well as the Seventh Mosque (where Malcolm, as minister, rose to prominence in and beyond the Nation Of Islam). Within each of these seven sections, a cross-cut of voices, sound and image focus – but also sometimes deliberately decent – a specific aspect of the received legend of Malcolm.

Anyone familiar with previous films by the BAFC will be well aware of their suspicions of ordinary narrative techniques, their resistance to self-explanation, or any mainstream approach to film, and will also be aware of their unwillingness to join in political boosterism and spurious unanimity, to disguise or deny weakness or disunity within the black political community. They argue, insistently, that this community's maturity can only be attested to if it can face up to its past, to errors and substantive – rather than merely tactical – differences which must be debated rather than ignored.



No flim-flam: Darrick Harris

Testament dealt with hope and betrayal in post-colonial Ghana; *Who Needs A Heart* focussed on Michael X, a 60s gangster-revolutionary figure still – it's claimed – considered profoundly embarrassing to more respectable UK currents of radical black thinking. Malcolm X may give them a subject they can be almost totally positive about, a self-taught intellectual, a pioneer of modern media politics, a hero, a martyr, a visionary... And yet it's the word "almost" in the previous sentence that you feel the BAFC would be least happy to lose. Although this is probably the most accessible of their films to date, by accident or design, it still off-sets the simplicity of Lee's *Malcolm X* (Lee himself, when he appears, is truculent and distant – as if his own favourite role in his movies, that of goofy Godardian jester-chorus, had left celluloid to haunt him in real life). The BAFC would rather treat the present tide of hero-worship as invaluable turbulence than as certainty, and the well-known, simple, heartwarmingly uncompromising story as a knuckling-down under the power of agenda'd storytelling at the expense of more complex (not necessarily negative) social facts – about how things have come to be, and where solutions might lie.

Seven Songs self-consciously applies techniques drawn from Paradjanov's *The Colour Of Pomegranates* (scenes from Malcolm's life as cool tableaux, in shallow focus, so that much of the scene blurs) and Vermeer's colour sense (the interviews are punctuated by glowing sepia stills of their subjects, tactile as parchment catching fire). As usual, the BAFC are not about to win prizes for easy-read 'blackness' or rampant populism.

In fact there's a conundrum here that they've willingly plunged into

without there being much immediate hope they'll solve it. They take it as read that serious black film is backward-looking and derivative compared to black popular culture, with its genius for enriching transformation.

But the directions they wish to pursue, their meditations on history and its discontents, are ones not at all well served by pop culture. Almost by definition, black pop culture, this site of explosive innovation at the very crux of technological change, privileges the urgent *now* over the reflective *then*, twists complexity and shadowed subtlety out of the present by reducing the past to fleeting cartoons and mood music. It's this engagement with history that the Collective acknowledge has become urgent – they see black politics as needing to find for itself a past that admits its crooks and embarrassments (such as Michael X), and to put them into appropriate relationship with its heroes.

That said, the BAFC's self-imposed problems with narratives and clarity are problems for everyone. Without its emotional force to unify it, largely supplied by the soundtrack, *Who Needs A Heart* would have been unwatchable; the BAFC's unwillingness to impose shape on the shapelessness of the information they uncovered, because they so dislike history's tendency to elide and distort, is an unwillingness to enter history at all. This gives them strengths – because they're so allergic to imposing their own simplifying vision, they can let interviewees speak in their own voices, and the voices build not towards the "many Malcolms" of the burgeoning cliché, but a single, elusive, fascinating man. But in the end, since they really do believe some things and not others, it's a kind of equivocation also.

Mark Sinker

REVIEW

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and laser discs, and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin (MFB) and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will simply be listed and the film review reference given in parentheses

Rental

Bob Roberts

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 19480

Certificate 15 Director Tim Robbins
An ambitious and scathing satire in which politician and folk singer Roberts (a Republican version of Bob Dylan) worms his corrupt way into the White House. (S&S September 1992)

City of Joy

UK/France 1992/Warner PEV 12412

Certificate 15 Director Roland Joffé
Action hero Patrick Swayze turns serious in this dreary drama set against a backdrop of poverty and extortion in Calcutta. An American doctor becomes involved in mob warfare. (S&S October 1992)

The Crying Game

UK 1992/PolyGram PG 1002

Certificate 18 Director Neil Jordan
This audacious thriller seems like several movies in one – mixing up a political thriller set in Ireland with an edgy romantic comedy. By turns flawed and intriguing. (S&S November 1992)

Howards End

UK 1991/Curzon CV 1006

Certificate PG Director James Ivory
The best of Merchant Ivory's E.M. Forster adaptations. Curzon's handsome tape unmask the super-35mm original and uses moderate letterboxing to create a new ratio (approximately 1.70:1) which retains nearly all of cinematographer Tony Pierce-Roberts' original images. (S&S May 1992)

Into the West

Eire 1992/EV EVV 1239

Certificate PG Director Mike Newell
Whimsical and sentimental tale from Jim Sheridan, writer/director of *My Left Foot*. Inspired by the legend of "Tir na nOg", two young Dublin boys head off to the mystical west on a magic white horse, pursued by their father, Gabriel Byrne. (S&S January 1993)

Just Like a Woman

UK 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 19890

Certificate 15 Director Christopher Monger
Refreshing drama dealing with the sensitive issue of transvestites, with any narrative shortcomings being balanced out by a feeling of bonhomie. Julie Walters is wonderful as a woman who finds love in the arms of a cross-dressing merchant banker. (S&S September 1992)

Man Trouble

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20184

Certificate 15 Director Bob Rafelson
Security man Jack Nicholson drools over concert singer Ellen Barkin in this weak and offensive film. (S&S February 1993)

Patriot Games

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 2655

Certificate 15 Director Phillip Noyce
Mindless pseudo-political thriller about

Irish terrorists seeking revenge on an American former CIA analyst. (S&S September 1992)

Peter's Friends

UK 1992/EV EVV 1242

Certificate 15 Director Kenneth Branagh
A group of upper-class university friends (including Branagh, Emma Thompson, Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie) share a mid-life reunion and thrash out their unresolved differences. This English *Big Chill* is a treat, packed with unexpected laughs. (S&S December 1992)

The Princess and the Goblin

UK/Hungary 1992/EV EVV 1258

Certificate U Director József Gémes
An uninventive and visually disappointing animation feature, in spite of the voices of talented actors Joss Ackland, Claire Bloom and Peggy Mount. (S&S January 1993)

Strictly Ballroom

Australia 1992/Guild 8714

Certificate PG Director Baz Luhrmann
This movie, which broke out of the Australian domestic market to become an international hit, is joyous, witty and intelligent. A handsome rebellious dancer and his 'ugly duckling' partner break all the rules in the stuffy world of ballroom dancing. (S&S October 1992)

Thunderheart

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14595

Certificate 15 Director Michael Apted
Yet another in the recent spate of murder-mysteries, set on Native American reservations, which explore the culture clash between tribal lore and modern police methods. Val Kilmer is unconvincing as the city cop who discovers his ethnic roots. (S&S October 1992)

What's Up Nurse?

UK 1977/EV EVV 1265

Certificate 18 Director Derek Ford
An embarrassing sex comedy with an array of TV stars (John Le Mesurier, Graham Stark, Bill Pertwee) floundering in a sea of saucy dialogue. (MFB No. 521)

What's Up Superdoc?

UK 1978/EV EVV 1264

Certificate 18 Director Derek Ford
More of the same, this time boasting slightly more explicit sex (notably during a visit to the Paul Raymond Revuebar) and a celebrity appearance by Hughie Green. Awful. (MFB No. 538)

White Men Can't Jump

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1959

Certificate 15 Director Ron Shelton
A fabulous, foul-mouthed comedy about two basketball playing con-men, wonderfully played by Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. Shelton's sparkling dialogue is on a par with *The Last Boy Scout* for its hilarious use of obscenity. Unmissable. (S&S October 1992)

White Sands

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12532

Certificate 15 Director Roger Donaldson
A deputy sheriff (Willem Dafoe) impersonates a murder victim in order to break into a criminal underworld. Unlike Donaldson's *No Way Out*, this torturous thriller lacks panache. (S&S September 1992)

Rental premiere

Article 99

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 13652

Certificate 15 Director Howard Deutch
Producers Michael Gruskoff, Michael I. Levy Screenplay Ron Cutler
Lead Actors Ray Liotta, Kiefer Sutherland, Forest Whitaker, Lea Thompson
97 minutes

Liotta and Sutherland provide an amiable comic double-act as two beleaguered doctors in this acerbic satire about the maltreatment of hospitalised war veterans. Pandemonium reigns when the disgruntled patients hijack the medical complex.

Black Death

Canada 1992/Imperial Entertainment IMP 121

Certificate 15 Director Sheldon Larry
Producer Paul Saltzman Screenplay I.C. Rapoport Lead Actors Kate Jackson, Al Waxman, Jeffrey Nordling, Chip Zien
93 minutes

Superior TV thriller, creating a genuine sense of claustrophobic tension. New York falls victim to a bubonic plague causing mass panic and city corruption.

Black Magic

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1627

Certificate 15 Director Daniel Taplitz
Producer Harvey Frand Screenplay Daniel Taplitz Lead Actors Judge Reinhold, Rachel Ward 89 minutes

Amiable and inventive TV comedy about a man who falls in love with his deceased cousin's girlfriend. Chaos abounds when the cousin's ghost appears, claiming that the girlfriend is a witch.

Blood Ties

USA 1991/Braveworld BRV 10151

Certificate PG Director/Producer Jim McBride
Executive Producers Richard Shapiro, Esther Shapiro Screenplay Richard Shapiro Lead Actors Harley Newton, Patrick Bauchau, Bo Hopkins, Kim Johnston 91 minutes
Thematically promising but ultimately disappointing TV series pilot, lacking the style of McBride's cinema work. Peaceful and loving vampires in LA are hunted by bigoted bible-bashers.

Dead Bolt

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20185

Certificate 15 Director Douglas Jackson
Producers Tom Berry, Franco Battista Screenplay Maria Trafficante, Frank Rehwaldt Lead Actors Justine Bateman, Adam Baldwin, Michele Scarabelli, Chris Mulkey 90 minutes

An unremarkable addition to the spate of horrors dealing with terror entering the home, a theme already exhausted in films such as *Pacific Heights*, *Single White Female* and the impressive *The Fear Inside*. Lodger Alec Danz (Baldwin) turns a medical student's home into a prison.

Dream Rider

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20186

Certificate U Director Bill Brown Producer Gary Schmoeller Screenplay Bill Brown
Lead Actors James Earl Jones, Leigh Taylor Young, Matthew Geriak 88 minutes
The human spirit triumphs over harsh circumstances in this true-life TV

Tom Charity on the fashion for the 'director's cut' on video

Choice cuts

Aliens, *Betty Blue*, *Blade Runner*, *Dances with Wolves*, *The Godfather III*, *JFK*... they sure don't make 'em like they used to. Not so long ago, the 'director's cut' inhabited a mythical hinterland of the mind: an auteurist utopia circumscribed by 'what if' and 'if only', where the prime exhibits were invariably *The Magnificent Ambersons* and (aptly) *Greed*. But now it seems that studio butchery is a thing of the past – at least if the current trend towards video and laser disc 'special editions' is anything to go by. As the term implies, these releases are aimed at the connoisseur and the completist, that much reviled individual, the film buff. The new 'special collector's boxed set' of *Betty Blue* promises not only an additional 61 minutes of discreetly letterboxed footage, but a booklet with a synopsis, cast list, biographies and stills – all the hallmarks of prestige.

There have been restorations before, of course, although it was only in the last decade that they emerged with any frequency. *Napoléon* at their head and *Lawrence of Arabia* bringing up the rear (it is curious how longer movies in particular just get longer and longer). These might be termed 'archival' projects – or as the French say, *versions intégrales* – and the recent spate of so-called 'directors' cuts' on video shelves reflects some of their lustre.

"This time it's More!" proclaimed the advertisements for *Aliens – Special Edition*, which featured some 17 minutes of footage "originally edited out," the press release explained, "to reduce the running time to an acceptable level for cinemas." Edited out by whom? Acceptable to whom? Although it was marketed as the director's cut, James Cameron has since acknowledged doubts about the supposedly 'restored' footage. It transpires that this is not his definitive version after all, but "a dance mix." By the same token, Cameron insists that the extended version of *The Abyss* released recently in the US is no more a director's cut than the 1989 version, when he exerted his right to the final cut.

The true prototype for the recent reworkings may be Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind – The Special Edition*, released theatrically in 1980 with a running time three minutes shorter than the original 135 minutes, after the director tightened up the middle section and added more extra-terrestrial footage to the climax. Whatever the relative merits of the two versions (and a third, broadcast on television, which incorporated all the available footage), the special edition surely represents the apogee of Spielberg's high-concept marketing philosophy. You don't need 25 words to convey the appeal of a film everybody's already seen. In a period where sequels increasingly take the form of inferior remakes, a re-issue is a sequel without the quality loss – and without the additional expense of shooting any film.

1980 might be seen as the last time Hollywood paid more than lip service to



Boxed in: Béatrice Dalle, Jean-Hugues Anglade in 'Betty Blue'

the concept of the director's cut, a brief flirtation with auteurism – the film-maker as star – which climaxed in such expensive commercial disasters as 1941, *Heaven's Gate* and *One From the Heart*. And despite all the rhetoric accompanying the re-edited *Blade Runner*, it would be naive to suppose that Hollywood would treat the film differently today (apart, of course, from casting Arnie as Deckard and insisting that he's a replicant). The current vogue for special editions is not symptomatic of a change in studio politics or practice; rather, it has to be viewed in commercial terms, and specifically in the context of the rise of such secondary markets as video, laser disc and pay television.

Between 1982 and 1991 the number of VCR households in Britain expanded from 2 to 15 million. For distributors, the video market is now four times the cinema box office – and even a theatrical hit like *Home Alone* can double its revenue on video. What effect this background is having on film-makers has yet to be determined, though *Lethal Weapon 2* went into production on the strength of the first film's performance on video, a history reflected in the sequel's fast-forward aesthetic.

As Judith Williamson points out in her book *Deadline At Dawn*, "Sony bought



The final cut? 'The Godfather III'

up Columbia Pictures not to become film producers, but to control the software – film-as-video – that belongs with its own hardware – VCRs." Sell-through video (which has far outstripped rental over the past five years) commodifies the movies like never before, packages and prices them, and grants us instant access to what was formerly (and formally) an elusive, transitory and above all illusory experience. Experience itself has become the ultimate consumer durable (one thinks of the memory implants in the Philip K. Dick films *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*). The special edition is prestige product to match top-of-the-range hardware: it extends consumer choice even as it prolongs the original material's shelf-life. Enough, it seems, is never enough.

Perhaps there is a useful by-product to all this. Watching Francis Coppola's re-edited *The Godfather – The Epic*, the viewer may find that while this is the most comprehensive version of the saga, it is also unnecessarily repetitive, whereas the extended video version of *The Godfather III* is more evenly paced than the original and fills out some of the supporting characters. It is no longer possible to consider any one of these versions 'definitive' (although the publicity for *The Godfather III* optimistically asserts that it is indeed the "Final Director's Cut").

The same ambiguity dogs the question of which is the 'real' ending for *Fatal Attraction*. The recent video re-issue of Adrian Lyne's thriller features an epilogue in which the director explains the thinking behind the alternative climaxes, and then the original ending as it was rejected by preview audiences. This is the very kindest cut of all, because it does more than allow the film-makers to have their cake and eat it; it grants a taste for the viewer as well. The extended video version of 'Betty Blue' is available from 5 April; 'JFK' is scheduled for release in the summer with 17 minutes of additional footage; the director's cut of 'Blade Runner' is due out in September

tear-jerker about a one-legged cyclist riding from California to Boston.

Elvis & the Colonel: The Untold Story

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 19841

Certificate 15 Director William A. Graham
Producer Daniel A. Sherkow Screenplay
Phil Penningroth Lead Actors
Beau Bridges, Rob Youngblood, Dan Shor,
Nicole Mercurio 95 minutes
Although factually inaccurate and
featuring dreadful special effects make-
up when Elvis hits his Vegas phase, this
TV special remains engrossing. Bridges
gives a superbly slimy portrayal of
Tom Parker but Youngblood fails to
capture the King's mannerisms. Also,
the idea of Elvis narrating from beyond
the grave is particularly silly.

Final Pulse

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12679

Certificate 15 Director Jerrold Freedman
Producer R.W. Goodwin Screenplay
Michael Braverman Lead Actors
Denis Arndt, Mark Blum 87 minutes
Overworked doctors battle a mysterious
virus which is ravaging Los Angeles
in this routine medical murder-
mystery thriller.

Illusions

USA 1991/CIC Video VHC 3020

Certificate 15 Director Victor Kulle
Producers Michael Canale, Gary Priesler
Screenplay Peter Colley Lead Actors
Robert Carradine, Heather Locklear,
Emma Samms, Ned Beatty 99 minutes
Pleasantly diverting made-for-TV
adaptation of Colley's stage play *I'll Be
Back before Midnight*. A distressed young
woman, worried by her husband's close
relationship with his sister, becomes
caught up in a fantasy world of
ghoulish deceit.

In the Heat of Passion

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 7963

Certificate 18 Director/Producer/Screenplay
Rodman Flender Lead Actors
Sally Kirkland, Nick Corri, Jack Carter,
Michael Greene 83 minutes
Erotic thriller about a handsome young
actor (Nick Corri) who accidentally
shoots his lover's husband. More plot
twists than the average 'suspense and
suspenders' fodder.

Killer Rules

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12639

Certificate 15 Director Robert Ellis Miller
Producer Paul R. Picard Screenplay
Paul Monash Lead Actors Jamey Sheridan,
Sela Ward, Sam Wanamaker 89 minutes
Predictable TV thriller set against the
backdrop of double-crossing Italian
mafia life. A gangster's mistress turns
government witness and is hunted
(against mob orders) by one man.

L.A. Goddess

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19818

Certificate 18 Director Jag Mundhra
Producers Michael Criscione,
Bruce Mulhearn Screenplay Jerry Davis
Lead Actors Kathy Shower, Jess Conaway,
Joe Estevez, David Heavener 96 minutes
Despite being billed as an erotic rehash
of *The Player*, this tacky light drama
features a distinct lack of both sex and
satire. Director Mundhra proves himself
unable to direct comedy, and *Playboy*
cover-star Kathy Shower turns in a
laughable performance.

Obsessed

USA 1992/Imperial Entertainment
IMP 119

Certificate 15 Director Jonathan Sanger
Producer S. Bryan Hickox Screenplay David
Peckinpah Lead Actors Shannen Doherty,
William Devane 88 minutes

A middle-aged bachelor's affair with an
obsessive young woman turns nasty in
this *Fatal Attraction*-style thriller.

The Other Woman

USA 1992/Imperial Entertainment
IMP 120

Certificate 18 Director Jag Mundhra
Producers Andrew Garroni,
Gregory Hippolyte Screenplay Georges
Des Esseintes Lead Actors Adrian Zmed,
Lee Anne Beaman, Jenna Persaud,
Sam Jones 88 minutes
Another dreadful "erotic thriller" from
Mundhra (see *L.A. Goddess*). An uptight
reporter delves into her husband's
private life and discovers forbidden fruit.

A Passion for Innocence

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 7324

Certificate 15 Director Dick Lowry Producers
Dick Lowry, Anne Kindberg Screenplay
Joe Cacaci Lead Actors Meredith Baxter,
Judith Ivey 95 minutes
The true-life sequel to *Till Murder Do Us
Part*, continuing the bizarre story of Betty
Broderick, jailed for murdering her
ex-husband and his new wife. A strong
performance by Baxter makes this a
diverting courtroom drama.

Paydirt

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 18586

Certificate 15 Director Bill Phillips
Producer Stephen J. Friedman Screenplay
Bill Phillips Lead Actors Jeff Daniels,
Catherine O'Hara, Dabney Coleman,
Rhea Perlman 85 minutes
Warring suburbanites and escaped
convicts race to find treasure buried in
a cosy neighbourhood garden. A flimsy
but likeable comedy.

The President's Child

USA 1992/FoxVideo 5841

Certificate PG Director Sam Pillsbury
Producer Lauren Film Productions
Screenplay Edmond Stevens Lead Actors
Donna Mills, William Devane, Trevor Eve
93 minutes
Sanitised TV thriller inspired by a
Fay Weldon novel. A glamorous TV
journalist's illegitimate child presents
a potential embarrassment for a
presidential candidate.

The Roller Blade Seven

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20183

Certificate 18 Director/Producer Donald G.
Jackson Screenplay Uncredited Lead Actors
Scott Shaw, Frank Stallone, Karen Black,
Joe Estevez, William Smith, Don Stroud
89 minutes
Move over Troma Pictures! A futuristic
band of roller-skating warriors (in rubber
fetish-wear) do battle in the "wheelzone"
to save a beautiful enchantress and the
universe from an evil emperor.

Sexual Intent

USA 1992/Medusa M 0392

Certificate 18 Director Kurt MacCarley
Producers Kai Ephron, Kurt MacCarley
Screenplay Kurt MacCarley Lead Actors
Gary Hudson, Michele Brin, Sarah Hill
87 minutes

Like *Animal Instincts*, this quirky "erotic
thriller" unbelievably claims to be based
on a true story. A womanising villain
preys on helpless victims but finds that
the tables are eventually turned.
Unusually for this genre, the plot
dominates rather than the kinky sex.

Shattered Promises

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 342

Certificate 15 Director John Korty Producer
Stephanie Austin Screenplay Andrew
Laskos Lead Actors Brian Dennehy,
Treat Williams, Embeth Davidtz,
Susan Ruttan 175 minutes
Solid true-life TV mini-series, boasting
yet another fine performance from
Dennehy. A corrupt Chicago attorney-
cum-mob boss (Williams) is confronted
by the city's only incorruptible cop
(Dennehy) when his wife's corpse is
found in his car trunk.

The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior

New Zealand 1992/
20.20 Vision NVT 19842

Certificate PG Director Michael Tuchner
Producer Sam Strangis Screenplay
Martin Copland, Scott Busby Lead Actors
Sam Neill, Jon Voight, Bruno Lawrence,
Kerry Fox, John Callen 94 minutes
A dramatic reconstruction of the sinking
of Greenpeace's vessel in New Zealand
which points the finger squarely at the
French Government.

Sunstroke

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2707

Certificate 15 Director/Producer James Keach
Screenplay Duane Poole Lead Actors
Jane Seymour, Stephen Meadows,
Steve Hailsbach, Ray Wise, Don Ameche
87 minutes
Jane Seymour stars in this made-for-TV
psychological thriller about a mysterious
woman who may or may not be a mass
murderer.

Telling Secrets

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 341

Certificate 15 Director Marvin J. Chomsky
Producer Dan Witt Screenplay Jennifer
Miller Lead Actors Cybill Shepherd,
Ken Olin, Mary Kay Place 129 minutes
An endearingly cynical true-life drama
following the exploits of a wealthy
psycho (Shepherd) who takes on the law
and wins. Shepherd clearly relishes the
role and the lack of a neat moral ending
is refreshing.

To Protect and Serve

USA 1993/EV EW 1245

Certificate 18 Director Eric Weston Producer
Angela B. Schapiro Screenplay
Eric Weston, Freeman King, Kent Perkins,
Daren Dalton Lead Actors
C. Thomas Howell, Lezlie Deane,
Richard Romanus, Joe Cortese 88 minutes
The first of an inevitable run of post-
Rodney King thrillers. A gang of cops
beat a black man to death in this tale
of police corruption. Weston efficiently
injects an air of menace but the baby-
faced Howell is hopelessly miscast as
the rugged, world-weary hero.

Trouble Bound

USA 1992/ITC 8404

Certificate 18 Director Jeffrey Reiner
Producers Tom Kuhn, Fred Weintraub
Screenplay Darrell Fetty, Francis Delia
Lead Actors Michael Madsen, Patricia
Arquette, Seymour Cassel 87 minutes



Boy's talk: Barry Levinson's 'Diner'

A cracking little road-movie, with
engaging performances by Michael
Madsen and Patricia Arquette. An ex-con
gives a mysterious young woman a lift
and becomes involved in a mafia war.

Under Pressure

USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 15333

Certificate 15 Director Peter Levin Executive
Producers Mark Sennet, Steve McGlothern
Screenplay John Miglis Lead Actors
Harry Hamlin, Teri Garr, Terry O'Quinn,
Gary Frank 94 minutes
With a pro-life campaigner currently
in prison for murdering a doctor in
America, this efficient and gripping
true-story drama is timely. A disturbed
husband (Hamlin) holds a hospital to
ransom when his wife is sterilised
to prevent a ninth child.

Wild Card

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1630

Certificate PG Director/Producer Mel Damski
Screenplay Scobie Richardson Lead Actors
Powers Boothe, Cindy Pickett 82 minutes
Powers Boothe gives a lively, camp
performance as an ex-minister turned
gambler in this made-for-TV adaptation
of Ted Thackrey Jnr's novel *Preacher*.
An investigation into the mysterious
death of a New Mexico landowner lifts
the lid on local corruption and vice.

Retail

And Now the Screaming Starts

UK 1973/VIPCO VIP 029 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Roy Ward Baker
Vintage haunted house caper with
Peter Cushing investigating a curse on
a young couple (Stephanie Beacham and
Ian Ogilvy). (MFB No. 490)

Betty Blue (37°2 le matin)

France 1986/FoxVideo WC 3907
Price £19.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Jean-Jacques Beineix
Previously unreleased extended version
(176 minutes) of this stylish film about a
disturbed young woman and a frustrated
writer. The added footage makes the
previous jolts in the final scenes from
gags to high tragedy less abrupt.
Subtitles (MFB No. 633)

Beyond the Law

Hong Kong 1990/MIA V 3355 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Lau Kar Wing
Producer Joe Siu Screenplay Barry Wong
Lead Actors Cynthia Rothrock, Kirk Miu,

Shing Fui On, Tong Chung Yip 92 minutes
Cashing in on the success of the
Above the Law films, this is further proof
that Rothrock should have taken the
path into big-budget films when she
had the chance. The choreography here
maintains her status as the queen
of kung fu. (Retail Premiere)

The Birdman of Alcatraz

USA 1962/MGM/UA PES 52269 Price £8.99

Certificate PG
Director John Frankenheimer
Burt Lancaster gives a splendid
performance in this true story about the
life of Robert Stroud, a man who spent
53 years in prison. Also starring Karl
Malden, Telly Savalas and Thelma Ritter.
(MFB No. 344)

Black Robe

Canada/Australia 1991/Entertainment
EVS 1092 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Bruce Beresford
(S&S March 1992)

Bliss

Australia 1985/VCI Cinema Club CC 7088
Price £5.99

Certificate 18 Director Ray Lawrence
Ad man Harry Joy (Barry Otto) 'dies' for
four minutes during a family gathering
and returns to find his idyllic life
resembling hell in this uneven but
watchable adaptation of Peter Carey's
novel. (MFB No. 646)

Bloody Birthday

USA 1980/VIPCO VIP 027 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Ed Hunt
Given the recent explosion of media
attention devoted to under-age video
renting, this movie's tag-line "Mum won't
like it but the kids will" is rather
tasteless. A dull shocker about three
children who go on a murder rampage.
(MFB No. 585)

The Collector (La Collectionneuse)

France 1967/Connoisseur CR III
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Eric Rohmer
Rohmer's first big commercial success
is the third in his 'Moral Tales' sequence
of films. A flirtatious young woman
(Haydée Politoff) who enjoys 'collecting'
men, finds her behaviour annoys her two
close male friends. Subtitles (MFB No. 425)

Diner

USA 1982/MGM/UA/Turner PES 50164
Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Barry Levinson
A re-release on the fine new Elite

Collection label. This rites-of-passage romp is enlivened by the sharp ensemble cast and improvised-style dialogue. (MFB No. 587)

Diva

France 1981/Electric EP 0023
£15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Jean-Jacques Beineix
Unavailable for several years due to legal problems, Beineix's flashy debut looks as good as ever. An opera-obsessed postal messenger dodges two gangs of thugs while in possession of a bootleg tape of his opera singer idol. Electric Video are releasing this with new and apparently more accurate subtitles.
Subtitles (MFB No. 584)

Dog Day Afternoon

USA 1975/Warner PES 01024 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet
John Cazale and Al Pacino raid a bank to finance a sex change operation for a boyfriend. Pacino was passed over for an Oscar at the time in favour of Jack Nicholson in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* – but only just. (MFB No. 502)

The Double Life of Véronique (La Double vie de Véronique)

France 1991/Tartan TVT 060S
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Krzysztof Kieślowski
Enigmatic but beautiful account of two identical women living parallel lives in France and Poland. More could have been made of the two locations, but a tantalising essay on duplicity nevertheless. Subtitles (S&S March 1992)

Dr. M

Germany/Italy/France 1989/
Curzon CV 0017 £15.99

Certificate TBC Director Claude Chabrol
A recent spate of suicides in Berlin leads to speculation about an Aids-like virus. Suspicion falls on the sinister Dr Marsfeldt (Alan Bates) and his vacation resorts. (MFB No. 683)

Evil Force

USA 1975/VIPCO VIP 030 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Evan Lee Producer Ray Atherton Screenplay Keith Burns
Lead Actors Larry Justin, J. Arthur Craig, James Habif 78 minutes
Christopher Lee agreed to introduce a serious film about the occult only to discover that his appearance was later spliced on to the front of this campus-based horror, with his name as top billing! A professor summons a demon to take revenge on a group of teenage rapists. Released as *The Hollywood Meatcleaver Massacre* in the US. (Retail Premiere)

Fellini's 8½ (Otto e mezzo)

Italy 1962/Connoisseur CR 108
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Federico Fellini
Regarded by many as his best film, Fellini's comment on the the movie-making process stars Marcello Mastroianni as his alter ego.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 357)

Gandhi

UK 1982/Columbia TriStar CVR 40135
Price £10.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG
Director Richard Attenborough
A personal triumph for Attenborough



Decadence: 'Fellini's 8½'

whose bold, sweeping tale of the life and times of India's best known pacifist won eight Oscars. Starring Ben Kingsley. (MFB No. 587)

The House Where Death Lives

USA 1980/VIPCO VIP 028 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Alan Beattie Producer John Coerin Screenplay Alan Beattie, Peter Shanaberg Lead Actors Patricia Percy, David Hayward, John Dukakis, Leon Charles 80 minutes
Originally titled *Delusion*, this turkey is most notable for an appearance by Joseph Cotten as an invalid whose live-in nurse witnesses all manner of heinous murders.

In the Heat of the Night

USA 1967/MGM/UA PES 51265 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison
A racist red-neck sheriff (Rod Steiger) learns to respect a black detective (Sidney Poitier) investigating the death of an industrialist in Mississippi. (MFB No. 405)

Klute

USA 1971/Warner PES 01027 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director Alan J. Pakula
Along with *All the President's Men*, this is arguably Pakula's finest film. A cop's (Donald Sutherland) investigations into the disappearance of a family friend leads him to a hard-edged hooker (Jane Fonda). (MFB No. 454)

Kuffs

USA 1991/Entertainment EVS 1090
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Bruce A. Evans
(S&S June 1992)

L.627

France 1992/Artificial Eye ART 055
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Bertrand Tavernier
France's urban demise is shown through the eyes of a jaded undercover narcotics cop who is torn between procedure and his informers. Complicating his life further is his sense of responsibility for an HIV-positive prostitute.
Subtitles (S&S January 1993)

The Lady Vanishes

UK 1938/Blockbuster Video CC 7071B
Price £4.99

Certificate U Director Alfred Hitchcock
Hitchcock's intriguing thriller starring Margaret Lockwood has been unavailable on video for ten years. This is the first release from the video label formed by the UK's largest video chain (US-owned

Blockbuster/Ritz Video), which intends to buy up rights to old classics from the major studios. B/W (MFB No. 56)

The Last Boy Scout

USA 1991/Warner PES 12217 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Tony Scott
Shane Black's (of *Lethal Weapon* fame) script crackles with one-liners, teaming newcomer Damon Wayans with Bruce Willis (a return to form for Willis).
Top-notch action pic. (S&S March 1992)

Laurel & Hardy:

Night Owls/The Hoose-Gow

USA 1930/1929/VVL HR 0056 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director James Parrott
Producer Hal Roach Lead Actors Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Edgar Kennedy, James Finlayson, Tiny Sanford 52 minutes
Two colourised short films from the Hal Roach library. Comedy duo Laurel and Hardy play two tramps in the first and end up in prison in the second.
Colourised (also available in B/W)

Lenny

USA 1974/MGM/UA PES 51663 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director Bob Fosse
The story of comedian Lenny Bruce and his struggles with the law. Notable performances from Dustin Hoffman and Valerie Perrine and a flashback narrative device that keeps the material alive.
B/W (MFB No. 496)

Lost in Time

USA 1991/Entertainment EVS 1089
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Anthony Hickox
(S&S Video October 1992)

Manhattan

USA 1979/MGM/UA PES 52242 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Woody Allen
Woody Allen stars as an older man who falls for a teenage girl and finds the going tough. A handsome celebration of New York. B/W (MFB No. 547)

The Marquise of O... (Die Marquise von O...)

West Germany 1976/Connoisseur CR 112
Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Eric Rohmer
Irony, restrained and touching version of Heinrich von Kleist's novella about double standards and mixed morals.
Subtitles (MFB No. 515)

Naked Lunch

UK/Canada 1991/First Independent
VA 30290 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director David Cronenberg
(S&S May 1992)

Naked Tango

USA 1990/Warner PES 90523 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Leonard Schrader
A hopelessly muddled and inept melodrama set in 20s Buenos Aires, with the emphasis on soft-core porn rather than tango. (S&S September 1991)

New York, New York

USA 1977/MGM/UA PES 51321 Price £8.99

Certificate PG Director Martin Scorsese
Robert De Niro is in fine form as an egotistical saxophonist who falls in and out of love with band singer Liza Minnelli. This is the most complete version of the film, running at 157 minutes, and includes the 'Happy Endings' sequence cut from the original release. (MFB No. 524)

Noce Blanche

France 1990/Tartan TVT 062S
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Jean-Claude Brisseau
French pop star Vanessa Paradis debuts as a Lolita-style schoolgirl in this well-observed but clichéd tale of *amour fou*.
Subtitles (S&S August 1991)

Oliver!

UK 1968/Columbia TriStar CVR 40048
Price £10.99/Widescreen

Certificate U Director Carol Reed
The widescreen format suits Reed's impressive opening-out of Lionel Bart's stage hit based on Dickens' tale. All the well-known songs are here. (MFB No. 418)

Once Upon a Crime

USA 1992/Entertainment EVS 1088
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Eugene Levy
(S&S September 1992)

Only the Lonely

USA 1991/FoxVideo 1877 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Chris Columbus
Curious follow-up to John Hughes and Chris Columbus' *Home Alone* hit. John Candy plays a middle-aged cop who falls in love with a mortician's daughter (Ally Sheedy). (S&S September 1991)

Paris vu par...

France 1964/Connoisseur CR 114
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Directors Jean Douchet, Jean Rouch, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Eric Rohmer, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol
Six hastily-shot tales of life in six different *arrondissements* in Paris, from the fathers of the *nouvelle vague*. Individually entertaining, collectively they show a wide range of the movement's styles and themes.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 387)

Pauline à la plage

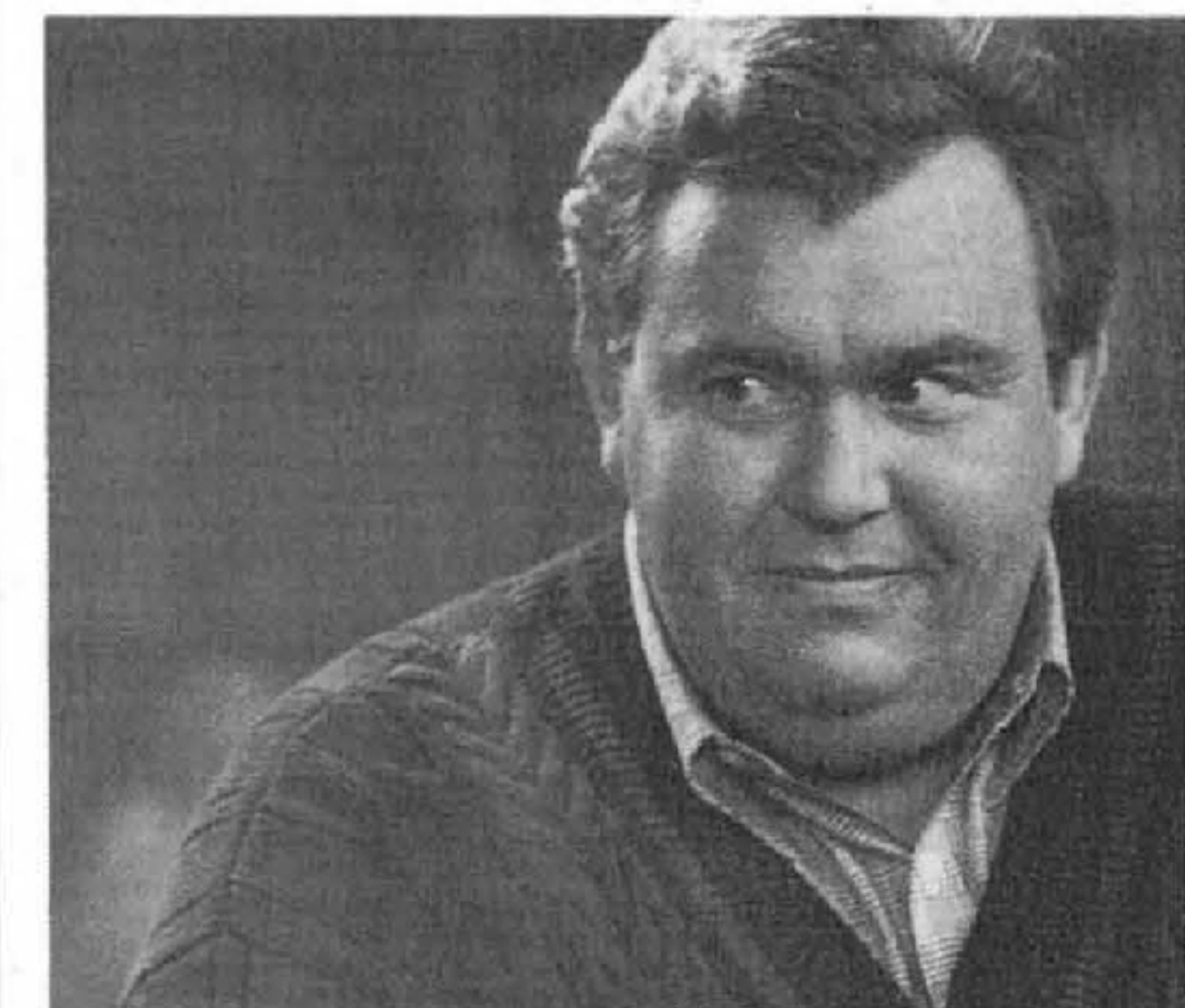
France 1983/Connoisseur CR 113
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Eric Rohmer
Rohmer's third film in the 'Comedy and Proverbs' series – winning him the Best Director award at the 1983 Berlin Festival. A teenage girl spends a summer holiday full of absurd sexual antics.
Subtitles (MFB No. 595)

Pink Cadillac

USA 1989/Warner PES 11877 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Buddy Van Horn Producer David Valdez Screenplay John Eskow Leading Actors John Dennis Johnstone, William Hickey, Bill McKinney, Bernadette Peters 116 minutes
Clint Eastwood stars as a skip-tracer pursuing Bernadette Peters' bail jumper. Too many plot-holes make this a bumpy ride. (Retail Premiere)



John Candy in 'Home Alone'



Stylish survivors: Martin Donovon, Adrienne Shelly in 'Trust'

Raise the Red Lantern

(Dahong Denglong Gaogao Gua)

Hong Kong 1991/Electric EP 0024
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG *Director* Zhang Yimou
Still banned in China, Zhang's extraordinarily beautiful tale of jealousy, concubines and desire is set in the confines of a fortress-like mansion. Losing some of its splendour on the small screen, it at least retains its letterbox ratio.

Subtitles (S&S February 1992)

Romuald et Juliette

France 1990/Tartan TVT 061S Price
£15.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG *Director* Coline Serreau
This crowd-pleaser about a managing director who learns about in-house company plotting through the cleaner, with whom he eventually (and incredibly) falls in love, is the feel-good retail video of the month.

Subtitles (MFB No. 679)

Slow Motion (Sauve qui peut (la vie))

France/Switzerland 1980/Artificial Eye
ART 053 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Jean-Luc Godard
Godard was welcomed back to the screen after several years absence with this tale of three people at turning points in their lives. This ultimately cold treatise on sexuality uses imaginative stop-motion photography. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 562)

Sometimes They Come Back

USA 1991/Entertainment EVS 1083
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Tom McLoughlin
(S&S Video June 1992)

The Stuff

USA 1985/VCI Cinema Club CC 7100
Price £5.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Larry Cohen
Cohen's most assured camp horror made to satirise the then "alarming" rise in the use of tofu, with Michael Moriarty as the industrial saboteur attempting to halt the craze of a new, deadly fast food. Danny Aiello lends his support. (MFB No. 627)

Succubus

West Germany 1967/Redemption
RETN 007 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Jesus Franco
An S/M tale about a nightclub performer who tortures and kills couples. Fantasy and reality become confused as she tries to make sense of bizarre visions that haunt her. (MFB No. 479)

These Foolish Things (Daddy Nostalgie)

France 1990/Tartan TVT 063S
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG *Director* Bertrand Tavernier
Politics, religion and a daughter's divorce cause tension on the Côte d'Azur when a woman (Jane Birkin) returns to visit her mother and her hospitalised father. Charming and well-played.

Subtitles (S&S June 1991)

Trust

USA 1991/Tartan TVT 035S Price £15.99/
Widescreen

Certificate 15 *Director* Hal Hartley
Hartley's hip, imaginative second feature has Adrienne Shelly (again) teaming up with an introvert with a violent past. Very stylish. (S&S September 1991)

Until the End of the World

Germany/France/Australia 1991/
Entertainment EVS 1091 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Wim Wenders
(S&S May 1992)

The Vampire Bat

USA 1933/Redemption RETN 008
Price £12.99

Certificate PG *Director* Frank Strayer
Producer Phil Goldstone *Screenplay*
Edward T. Lowe *Lead Actors* Lionel Atwill,
Fay Wray, Melvyn Douglas *60 minutes*
This eerie thriller was a big hit for
Majestic Studios in the 30s. A magistrate
(Douglas) sets out to solve a series of
strange murders in a Central European
village where the victims are found
drained of their blood.
B/W (Retail Premiere)

Venus in Furs

Italy/Germany 1969/Redemption
RETN 006 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Massimo Dallamano
Severin, who craves sexual domination,
finds a perfect partner in the equally-
perverse Wanda. They set off on a sexual
odyssey that aims to draw a similarly-
inclined target audience into their web
of desire and guilt. This version has been
cut for video release. (MFB No. 458)

Retail collection

The Carry On Collection:

Carry On Cabby/Carry On Nurse

UK 1963/1958 Warner PES 38322

Carry On Cleo/Carry On Sergeant

UK 1964/1958 Warner PES 38327

Carry On Constable/Carry On Jack

UK 1960/1964 Warner PES 38323

Carry On Regardless/Carry On Cowboy

UK 1961/1965 Warner PES 38325

Carry On Screaming/Carry On Teacher

UK 1966/1959 Warner PES 38326

Carry On Spying/Carry On Cruising

Price £9.99 each UK 1964/1962
Warner PES 38324

Certificate U *Director* Gerald Thomas

A feast for fans of double entendre and British silly humour, this collection of *Carry On* films range from the early *Carry On Nurse* to the later *Carry On Screaming*. Stars such as Sid James, Hattie Jacques, Joan Sims and Kenneth Williams romp their way through the comedies that you either love or loathe.

Laser disc

Aces: Iron Eagle III

Pioneer PLFEB 30641

PAL CLV Fullscreen 1.33:1

USA 1992 Price £24.99

Certificate 15 *Director* John Glen
Enjoyable gung-ho action adventure,
boasting tongue-in-cheek thrills.
Lou Gossett Jnr teams up with three
WWII air-aces, tracks a fiendish German
drug lord to the jungles of South
America and blows up an entire village.
(S&S Video June 1992)

Jacob's Ladder

Pioneer PLFEB 30631

PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)

USA 1989 Price £24.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Adrian Lyne
Far and away Lyne's most impressive and
inventive film, this psychological thriller
is both visually alluring and thematically
rewarding. Vietnam veteran Jacob Singer
is haunted by terrifying hallucinations
and combat flashbacks. The script is
a treat and Tim Robbins' performance
shows the talent that he developed later
in *Bob Roberts*. (S&S October 1991)

The Omega Man

Tartan/Blue Dolphin TVL 042

PAL CLV (Side 1) CAV (Side 2)

Widescreen 2.35:1

USA 1971 Price £29.95

Certificate PG *Director* Boris Sagal
Adapted from Richard Matheson's
classic sci-fi novel *I Am Legend*, Sagal's
flawed but intelligent fantasy pits
Charlton Heston against a plague of
post-apocalyptic mutants. The film
retains a certain charm and chilling
power, despite the fact that it is
anachronistically set in a ravaged,
futuristic 1977. (MFB No. 458)

Rambling Rose

Pioneer PLFEB 30651

PAL CLV Academy 1.33:1

USA 1991 Price £24.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Martha Coolidge
A beautifully played rites-of-passage
movie, intelligently adapted by Calder
Willingham from his own novel and
sensitively directed by Coolidge. As with
the cinema and video releases of this
film, this print has been cut by the BBFC
to comply with the child protection laws,
resulting in a weakening of the most
powerful scenes. (S&S November 1991)

WIND UP

By Mark Kermode

Wings Hauser, Cynthia Rothrock, Michael Dudikoff, John Saxon and Delia Shepard – these names may mean nothing to cinema audiences, but to the army of video renters (who currently outnumber cinemagoers by about five to one) they are household names. Former child star Linda Blair (now in her 30s), may have disappeared entirely from the big screen after her appearance in the 1977 flop 'Exorcist II: The Heretic', not to resurface until the horror spoof 'Repossessed' (1990), but she could be seen in no less than 14 video rental premieres during this 'dormant' cinema period. Blair's video career includes films such as the horror-thriller 'Witchery' and 'Bad Blood', and her repertoire extends to comedy with 'Night Patrol' and 'Up Your Alley', about a reporter who goes undercover with the homeless.

Action man Wings Hauser is another example of an actor who has gained star status on video. With one minor exception ('Tough Guys Don't Dance') none of Hauser's 20-plus action/thriller movies has had a UK theatrical release, but all have had the support of a loyal video audience. He can be seen at his best in the entertaining 'The Art of Dying' (which he starred in, directed and composed part of the score for) about a hard-nosed cop who hunts down a snuff film-maker.

A swift glance through the trade press, where tapes are assessed not on their artistic merit but on their potential renting appeal, confirms the bankability of stars. It's almost impossible to find a tape with a famous video face given a 'rentability rating' (the trade term for selling to the renters) of less than 7 out of 10. Although many video stars who have migrated from cinema are looked down on by critics as 'failed' film actors (Blair, Rutger Hauer and Michael Ironside are prime examples), other actors have only ever been video stars, associated with genres that are unique to video.

The most notable of these are martial arts films, 'erotic thrillers' and made-for-TV 'true-story' dramas. Even martial arts movies such as 'Best of the Best II' (with rental premiere star Eric Roberts) and 'Rapid Fire' which are granted fleeting theatrical releases are aimed primarily at the video market. The current queen of kung fu is Cynthia Rothrock, a female cross between Bruce Lee and Harold Lloyd, whose 'Beyond the Law' becomes available on retail this month.

The 'erotic thriller' market, which in Britain has been spearheaded by the feisty independent label Medusa, is another burgeoning area. The top star of these movies is without doubt Delia Shepard. Most recently, Shepard has been seen in 'Mirror Images', 'Secret Games' and 'Night Rhythms'.

The stars of video are unlikely ever to become big in British cinemas as long as they remain faithful to their speciality genres, but their strong position in the video market is secure. Cinemagoers may never have heard of Cynthia Rothrock, Wings Hauser and Delia Shepard – but here on the 'Sight and Sound' video pages, we salute them!



'Rage and Honour' with Cynthia Rothrock



FILM PRODUCTION COURSE

Shoot a film under the supervision of top professionals at London's major production centre.

Prominent Studios is the only feature film production centre offering training.

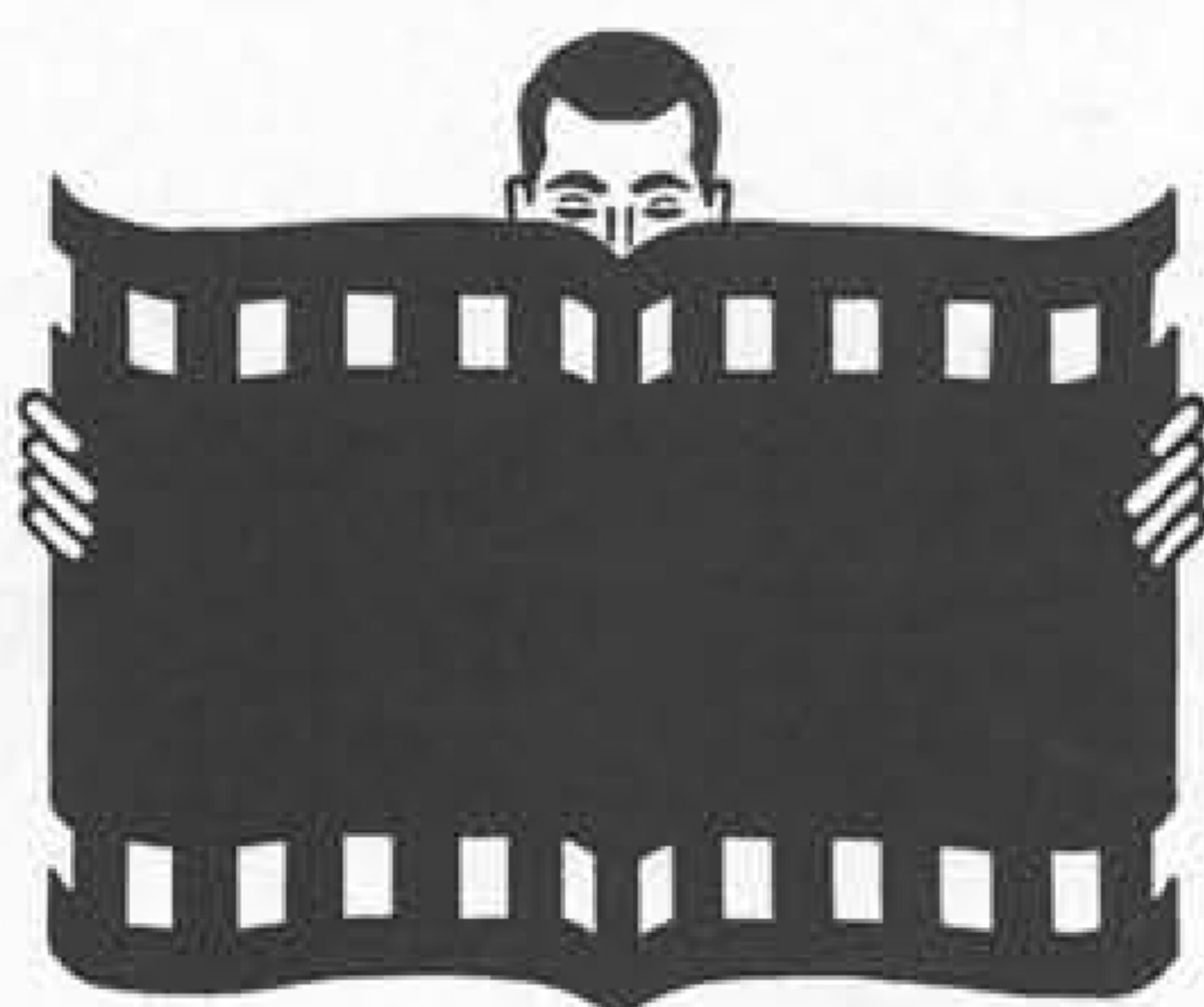
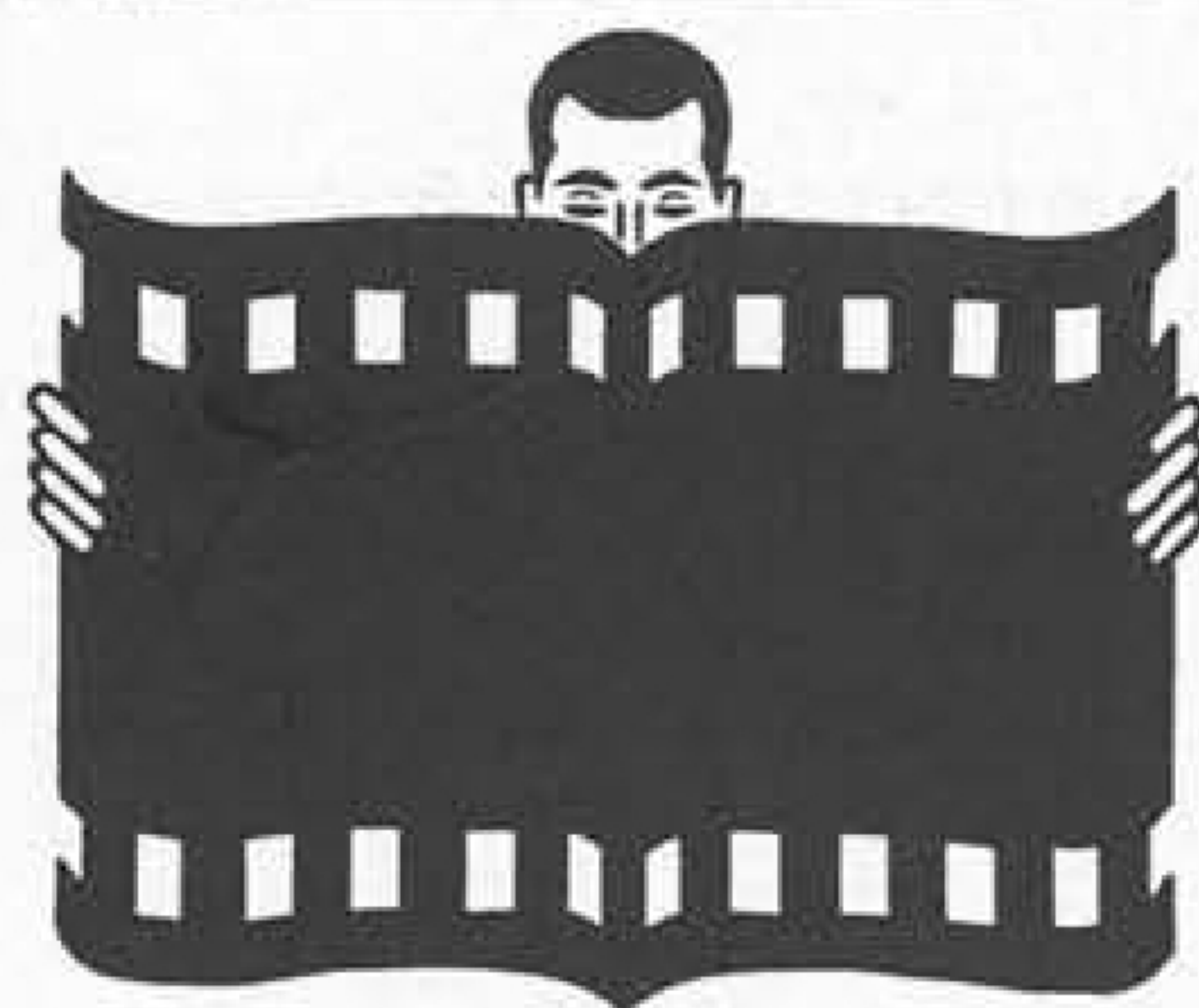
The "Future in Films" course comprises of sixteen intense sessions. During the course you will learn the essential aspects of film making by writing and shooting your own production with other students. The course is open to all ages and abilities. Previous experience is useful, but not necessary.

POST - COURSE WORKSHOP

On successful completion of the course, you may join the "Network" Workshop. This will give you access to the equipment, facilities and advice which is available at Prominent Studios.

The "Network" will enable you, together with other students, to make your own productions.

Contact: Course Unit, Prominent Studios, 68a Delancy St, London NW1 7RY. Tel: 071 284 0242



David Henry, 36 Meon Road, London W3 8AN

UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM & TELEVISION STUDIES

Three Lectureships

Applications are invited for three lectureships, two in Theatre Studies and one in Film & Television Studies. The Department offers undergraduate and Masters courses in both Theatre Studies and in Film & Television Studies. It is a highly regarded research and teaching department, rated 5A in the last research selectivity exercise. Two prestigious journals - *Screen* and *Theatre Research International* - are edited within the Department, and there is a growing level of postgraduate activity. In teaching we attach importance to the integration of theoretical, practical and historical approaches to study. Candidates are expected to have a proven commitment to research, and an interest in innovative approaches to teaching. Successful applicants will contribute to all aspects of teaching and research, and, since the courses are currently under formal review, there will be an early opportunity to contribute to curriculum design.

Theatre Studies (two posts)

You will be expected to conduct practical classes at undergraduate level and be aware of the usefulness of practical experimentation in the development of individual research. An interest in, and experience of scenography will be an advantage. Other specialist areas which will complement existing strengths are contemporary theatre theory and practice outwith the British Isles; non - European theatre: aspects of European theatre history pre - 1850. (Ref. 7862)

Film & Television Studies (one post)

Staff are expected to teach in both cinema and television, but in this instance a particular interest in the development of advanced teaching and research in television will be an advantage. We are also keen to complement existing teaching with courses in, for example, non-fiction film and television; gender studies; non Anglo-European cinema and television. An interest in practical teaching and video production will also be an advantage. (Ref. 7863)

The appointments will be on the Grade A scale. One appointment in Theatre Studies will commence in October 1993. The other two appointments will commence in January 1994.

Further particulars may be obtained from the Academic Personnel Office, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QQ, where applications (8 copies) giving the names and addresses of three referees should be lodged on or before 30th April, 1993.

In reply, please quote appropriate reference number.

The University is an Equal Opportunities Employer

RARE FILM POSTERS

SEND £3 FOR OUR FULLY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF RARE FILM POSTERS TO:



SYLVIA EDWARDS,
23,
MARCHMONT ROAD,
EDINBURGH EH9 1HY

Fully illustrated Catalogue of STAR PORTRAITS also available at £2 From Abbott and Costello to Mai Zetterling

Telephone: 031-229 5165

THAT OBSCURE OBJECT..... FOUND!

Hard-to-get movies on video found worldwide.

Classics, rarities, cult favourites, latest international releases.

FILMSEARCH INTERNATIONAL

CINEMA HOUSE
93 WARDOUR STREET
LONDON W1V 3TE

TEL: 081-459 6728
OR FAX YOUR REQUIREMENTS TO:
071-494 2695

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Video shopping

From Tony Boyle

Your list of contributors (S&S Video supplement) discloses that Annette Kuhn "teaches film". Her top ten for the 50s makes me pleased to be miles from her tutorials.

The omission of *Vertigo* is a dizzy aberration, and while *Rear Window* is certainly a masterpiece, it should be pointed out that Grace Kelly's fearless scaling of walls in nylons and high heels was shot by Hitchcock with the partial use of a stunt double.

Kuhn's selection of *Calamity Jane* in a decade which produced *The Band Wagon*, *Brigadoon* and *Funny Face* denotes an extraordinary musical illiteracy. And the kick she gets out of Doris Day's cross-dressing should be placed against the well-scrubbed normality applied for the rendition of 'Secret Love'. Mackendrick's *Mandy* is not in the same league as *The Ladykillers* and *Sweet Smell of Success*. And if Kuhn cannot find a single video of Sirk, where was she when *A Time to Love* and *a Time to Die* and *Imitation of Life* hit the shelves? Kuhn's shopping (like her choices of the 50s) seems much too parochial.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

S&S: To the best of our knowledge Sirk's films are not currently available on video.

The film's the thing

From Robin Holloway

It is very welcome to have *Sight and Sound* join the voluble public debate about 'art films' on video. However, Brad Stevens' piece (S&S April) would have benefited from some elementary research.

Connoisseur Video has released the Jacques Tati film *Mon Oncle* in a "cut English-language version" because this is the version developed by Tati for release in English language speaking territories. The same reasoning applies to the release of *Confidential Report*, which is not, as Stevens points out, the US version called *Mr Arkadin*; it is in fact the European version called *Confidential Report*. The US version may be available in the US.

On his point concerning cuts in different versions (television versus video), Stevens refers to *Zéro de conduite*. I cannot answer for Artificial Eye, but I can make the point that before a film is released on video (or laser disc, for that matter) it must be submitted to the BBFC for re-certification. The BBFC regards home video - with its option of freeze framing and random access by young people - as significantly different from cinema viewing and so insists on treating video classification as a separate matter. As a result, a theatrical version, television version and video version of a title may differ slightly or significantly. Extreme cases like *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* are well documented, but the minor change of removing seven seconds of horses falling over from the Connoisseur Video release of Tony Richardson's *Charge of the Light Brigade* (the technique used to trip them is now outlawed) added many hundreds of pounds to the cost of bringing this film to as wide a public as possible.

A propos of the "wilfully bizarre" choice

of films released: there is not some great movie supermarket where we and our competitors go to shop for titles. The process of releasing any film on video is fraught with difficulties which only increase when the film concerned is neither contemporary nor mainstream. Rights have to be bought, prints found, masters manufactured, subtitles created, the BBFC satisfied - it is a long and expensive process which eventually delivers that little plastic box to your local video store. If rights and materials were as easy to obtain as they are for *Star Trek*, which only requires a lot of money, we could all increase our output a hundredfold and Stevens would have to look elsewhere for something to complain about.

This is not to be entirely churlish about Stevens' article: it is gratifying to have increased awareness of and interest in what companies like us are doing. It can only be in the best interest of cinema lovers that it is as easy to buy and watch *La Règle du jeu* as it is *Terminator 2*. Let's not forget, video is only the medium: the film's the thing.

Connoisseur Video, London W1

King meets X

From Tom Zaniello

Despite Lisa Kennedy's reference to the "doctored" photograph of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X together in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (S&S February), the photograph is genuine, recording the (apparently) only meeting between the two men. Peter Goldman's *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* describes the moment: during a US Senate filibuster on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Malcolm X slipped into the back row of Dr King's news conference. A photographer snapped the two shaking hands as they met in the hallway. Goldman's record of their conversation does sound doctored:

Malcolm X: "Good to see you."

King: "Good to see you."

Malcolm X: "Now you're going to get investigated."

Fort Thomas, Kentucky

Jordan's rehash

From Rufus Lang

There has been nothing but elegaic gushing over Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* since it was released in the US, right up to the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. But does anyone remember Jordan's *Mona Lisa*? Has anyone had the insight or the cajones to jump off the bandwagon for long enough to observe that *The Crying Game* is nothing more than *Mona Lisa* with a penis?

Which film is this? A movie named after a song that will be heard over and over again throughout. The hero is an inexplicably sweet, naive and gullible man in his mid-to-late 40s who is enmeshed in a violent subculture that, in the real world, he would never survive in. The hero is thrown together with a mysterious woman who is also part of a sleazy nocturnal underworld. He falls in love with her only to be shocked by the discovery that she is not what she appears to be. She is threatened, he protects her, she shoots his 'boss'. The film opens with a shot of a bridge; uses a photograph to set the hero off on a search for someone else's lover; ends with a blood-bath and then they all live happily ever after.

Forget that whatever the IRA may be,

they are not a disorganised, brain dead bunch of disaffected yuppies. Pay no attention to the fact that a sweet, sensitive, suggestible and naive middle-aged man would not be at the top of the IRA's list of guards, marksmen or assassins. Or that the botched assassination at the end makes no sense since their target visited that brothel like clockwork week after week. None of these lapses comes close to the confounding (and as yet unexplained) fact that for the female lead in this highly touted film, Jordan chose a transvestite who is a dead ringer for Cathy Tyson in *Mona Lisa*. Is this a distracting coincidence, evidence of an unconscious compulsion, or a deliberate atavistic echo on Jordan's part? Why choose a man who not only looks like Tyson but also groom him to walk, talk and dress exactly like her?

There's nothing wrong with Jordan cannibalising his own work, I suppose, but without a shot of that which Jay Davidson has and Cathy Tyson does not, would there really be all this hullabaloo over *The Crying Game*? Without *Mona Lisa*, *The Crying Game* would be an original. With it, the film is just a 90s rehashing of its predecessor.

University of California, San Diego

A fig for you

From Tom Milne and John Minchinton

In your April issue, discussing versions of *Zéro de conduite*, Brad Stevens remarks on the "absurd translation of 'Je vous dis merde' as 'Bugger off'."

At the Battle of Waterloo an English officer cried "Frenchmen! Surrender!", to which the Baron de Cambronne replied "Je vous dis merde." Subsequently, *merde* was referred to in polite society as *le mot de Cambronne* and the defiant, quite unambiguous expression became part of French culture. It cannot be literally translated as "Shit to you", because it means, to use English expressions ancient and modern: a fig for you, get fucked, sod off, up yours, get stuffed, piss off, balls, bugger off...

When Tabard twice uses this expression to defy the teachers in *Zéro de conduite*, it is a precise choice of historic words - guaranteed to shock, outrage and lead to revolt. In subtitling the film in English it would have been an absurd mistranslation to interpret this meaning otherwise.

Hertfordshire

Competition answers

The answers to the Potemkin competition in February's *Sight and Sound* are: 1. Roberto Rossellini; 2. Peggy Wood; 3. Father Brown; 4. Sister Sharon Falconer; 5. Bing Crosby, Spencer Tracy; 6. Black Narcissus; 7. All have played the pope; 8. *Sous le soleil de Satan*; 9. 7th Day Adventist; 10. *Sea Wife*.

The winners are: Nigel Blunt from Gwent, South Wales; Maureen Ridley from Middlesbrough; Pete Tate from Leicester.

Additions

January 1993: *Soft Top*, *Hard Shoulder* 'Morningtown Ride' is performed in the film by Elaine Collins and Phyllis Logan; 'Li'l Devil' is by Ian Astbury, William Duffy and performed by 'The Cult'; 'Soft Top, Hard Shoulder' and 'Too Much Pride' are by and performed by Chris Rea.

'Blood lines' (p.12): Philip Saville's *Count Dracula* was made in 1977, not 1979.

CAMBRIDGE

Film Classics

The Films of Woody Allen

SAM B. GIRGUS

The Films of Woody Allen is the first full-length study of Woody Allen the artist as opposed to the celebrity and personality and argues that Allen is a major artistic force.

£22.95 net HB 0 521 38095 2 192 pp.

£7.95 net PB 0 521 38999 2

Cambridge Film Classics

The Films of Alfred Hitchcock

DAVID STERRIT

The introduction gives an overview of Hitchcock's long career, with special attention to the varied influences on his work.

£27.95 net HB 0 521 39133 4 160 pp.

£7.95 net PB 0 521 39814 2

Cambridge Film Classics

The Films of Roberto Rossellini

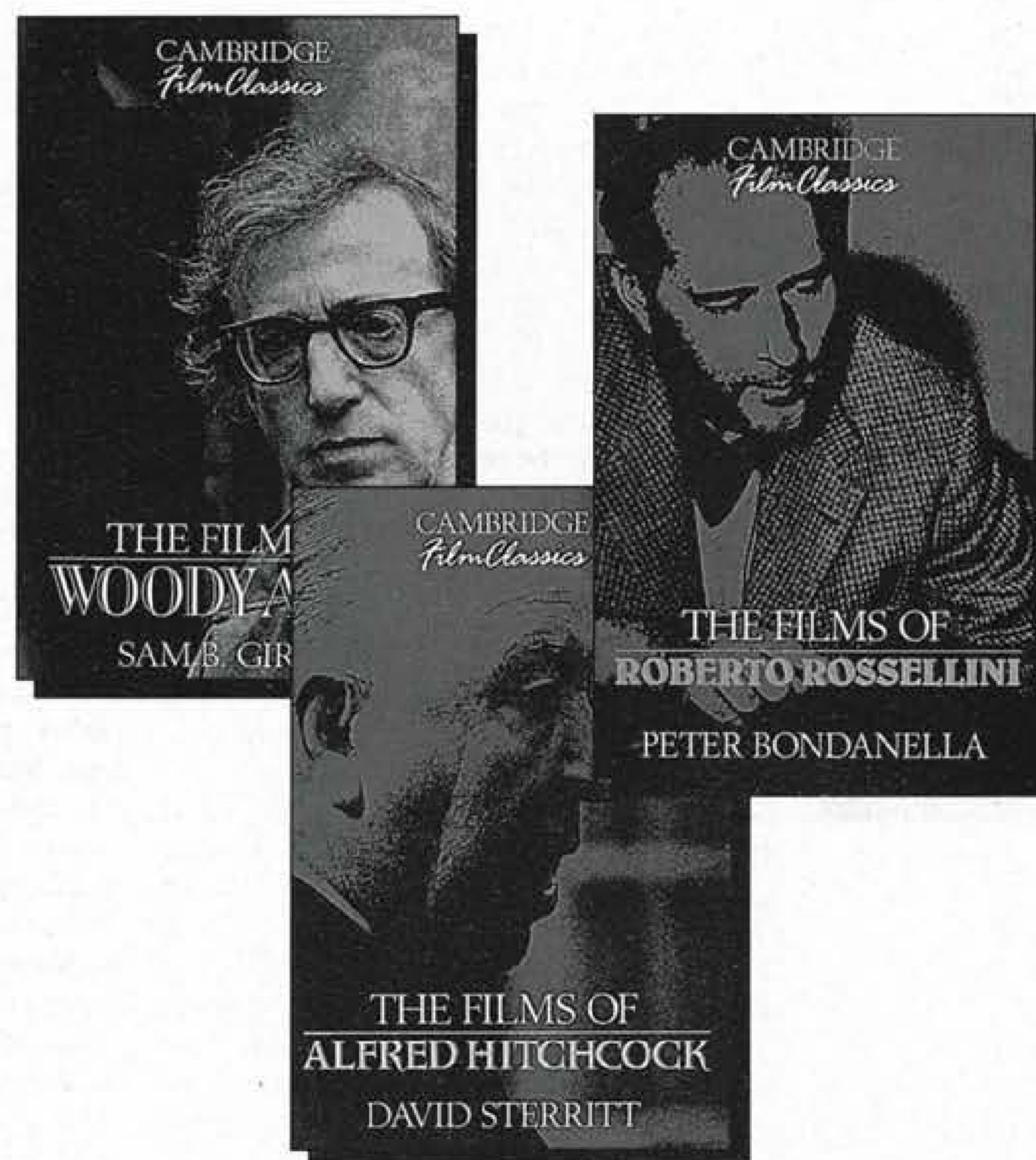
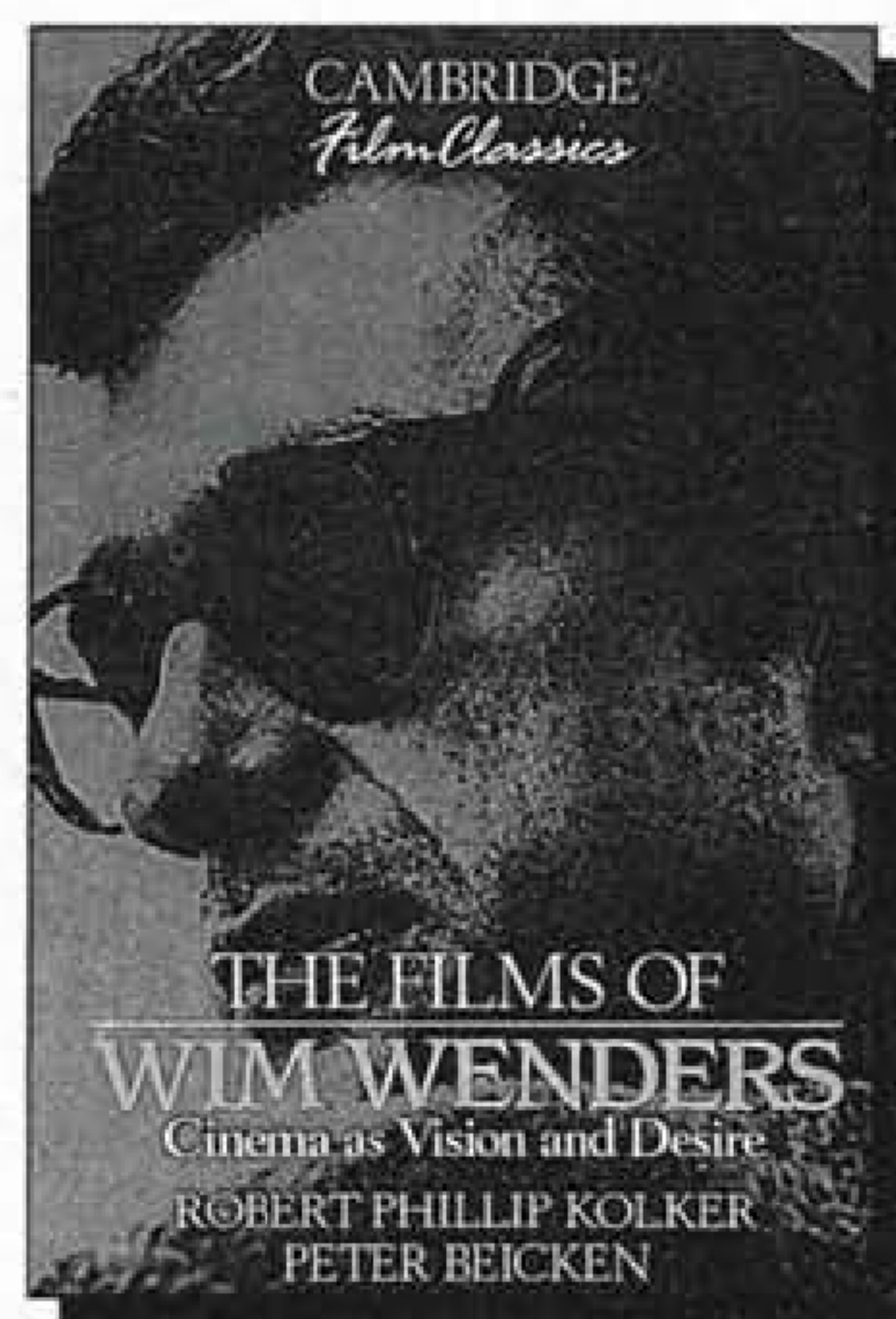
PETER BONDANELLA

The Films of Roberto Rossellini traces the career of one of the most influential Italian filmmakers through close analysis of the seven films that mark important turning points in his evolution.

£27.95 net HB 0 521 39236 5 256 pp.

£9.95 net PB 0 521 39866 5

Cambridge Film Classics



The Films of Wim Wenders

ROBERT PHILLIP KOLKER

PETER BEICKEN

The authors trace the development of one of the most well-known directors of the New German Cinema that flourished in the 1970s and early 1980s.

£27.95 net HB 0 521 38064 2 244 pp.

£9.95 net PB 0 521 38976 3

Cambridge Film Classics

Avant-Garde Film

Motion Studies

SCOTT MACDONALD

Avant-Garde Film examines fifteen of the most suggestive and useful films from the independent film tradition.

£27.95 net HB 0 521 38129 0 192 pp.

£9.95 net PB 0 521 38821 X

Cambridge Film Classics



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU

Available from all good video stockists

FROM MAY 4TH

A Bullet
for the
General



THE SPAGHETTI
WESTERN
COLLECTION

A Bullet for the General (Wide screen) 112 mins.
"The first and the best of the Italian 'Mexi-Westerns'. Much ingenious violence and cruelty ensues against an excellently drawn backdrop of the Mexican revolution. Made two years before it shares the same locale and dark moral territory as Sam Peckinpah's **THE WILD BUNCH**."

Alex Cox

Django
Strikes
Again



THE SPAGHETTI
WESTERN
COLLECTION

Django Strikes Again (Full screen) 87 mins.
"Django, the black-clad, coffin-dragging, Gattling-gun wielding mercenary/avenger digs up his coffin, dusts off his machine-gun and returns to his deadly trade! Donald Pleasence and Franco Nero star in this, the only true sequel and fitting tribute to Corbucci's original **...DJANGO**."

Alex Cox

Face
to
Face



THE SPAGHETTI
WESTERN
COLLECTION

Face to Face (Wide screen) 91 mins.
"A Spaghetti Western allegory about the rise of European fascism and an eerie psychological tale of doppelgangers! Featuring an outstanding score by Ennio Morricone. Sollima's co-author Sergio Donati also collaborated on the script for Leone's **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST**."

Alex Cox

AKTIV



Italian Westerns have come to enjoy both a critical revival and a cult status worldwide. This anthology represents some of the finest examples of this genre, which continues to influence contemporary Hollywood cinema (Sam Peckinpah, Clint Eastwood). These movies are presented in their original widescreen format.

**THE SPAGHETTI
WESTERN
COLLECTION**

Distributed by RTM/Pinnacle

A FISTFUL OF VIDEOS

for more information and orders phone 0734 576165